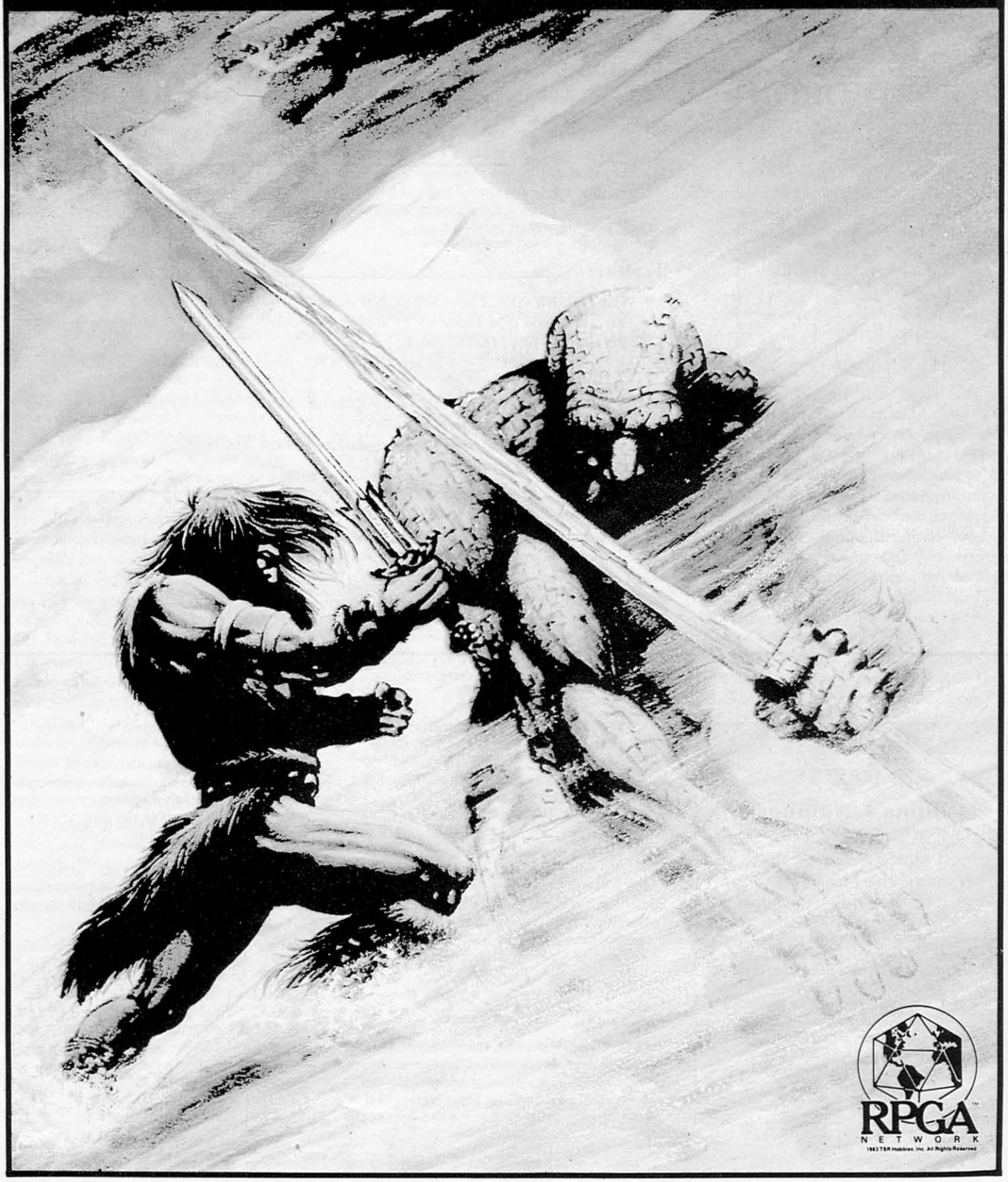
POLYHEDRON™

Newszine Issue 21



RPGA™ NETWORK

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Contents

About the cover
At the request of his lady, Ren Grakkan searches in the cold northlands for the *white cloak of enchanting*. See page 6 for the article by James M. Ward. Cover art by Tim Truman.

Cover Story

6 Encounters — *by James M. Ward. Ren Grakkan searches for the* white cloak of enchanting.

Special Feature

13 Witchstone — *by Carl Smith. The RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournament module used at GEN CON® South 1983 Game Fair makes it to the pages of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine.*

Features

9 Why gargoyles don't have wings, but should — *by E. Gary Gygax.*
10 Take command of a Titan! — *by Roger E. Moore. "Big Ship" campaigns in the STAR FRONTIERS® game.*
21 More of your NPCs — *A mixed bag of NPCs provided by RPGA™ Network members.*
23 Module building from A to Z — *by Roger E. Moore. Creating adventures for your campaigns (and for publication).*
29 Dispel Confusion — *by Penny Petticord and Frank Mentzer.*

Departments

5 Notes from HQ
8 Observations from a veteran gamer — *by Sonny Scott*
12 Spelling Bee — *by Frank Mentzer. An old favorite returns.*
29 The RPGA Network Scoring System

POLYHEDRON™

NEWSZINE

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Notes from HQ

Ho, ho, ho! And happy holidays to all! May you each find an *ioun stone* in your stocking.

First the good news

Features

The module feature for December is a wintry scenario with a lot of **big** surprises. Some of you may already be familiar with it. Carl Smith's "Witchstone" was originally designed as an official RPGA tournament for GEN CON® South; then it was used at several smaller conventions in the Midwest during the last year or so.

You asked for it and you got it! Back at the members meeting at GEN CON® 17, you asked Gary Gygax to write for POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, and I'll be a kobold's cousin if there wasn't a pair of articles on the editor's desk within a week after the con. You'll find the first of them just a few pages from here. Let us know what else you'd like to see — it's your requests that make it happen.

Issue #21 marks the return of an old favorite for you fantasy buffs — the "Spelling Bee" column by Frank Mentzer. In it you'll find interesting notes and expansions on spells from the AD&D® game which may start you thinking of new ways to use the same old stuff.

Other items of interest this issue include the first of a 2-part article by Roger Moore (suspected of being a deranged cyborg in disguise) on big ships for the STAR FRONTIERS® Game, with notes on using the material in other space role playing systems as well. Jim Ward's "Encounters" feature will give the details and outcome of the frosty dilemma pictured on the front cover.

Heard about the new scoring system used at the RPGA-Network sponsored tournaments this year? Wondering how it works? All the details on the new (or rather, the old) system are laid out in this issue. It's a different concept than some of you have ever experienced before, but it works. We'd like to hear your comments and suggestions regarding the system. So communicate! After all, this is **your** club, and your ideas help to shape future programs.

Speaking of participation, member Sonny Scott has contributed an article sharing his thoughts on the things that make a campaign great. I'm sure each one of us has an idea to share on that subject, so write in and trade your ideas!

Other News

The membership directory is proceeding on schedule. We expect to release the 1985 directory in February of the upcoming year (provided the computer demons don't eat our membership listings). It will be mailed free of charge to all current members, and new members will each receive a copy in their membership packets.

And now for the bad news...

This is the farewell issue for our fine editor, Mary Kirchoff, who almost singlehandedly brought the POLYHEDRON Newszine up to its current standard of excellence. We wish her luck on her new writing career, but we'll miss her talents. I will be taking her place as editor, at least for the time being. But I will have to learn as I go, so please excoos the missspelligs.

Correspondence

We are making progress, but we are still far behind on answering correspondence due to backup from convention season, vacations, transfers, etc. Please bear with us while we work through the backlog. If you have written and not received a response, please be patient. We will get to you as soon as possible. **Please** do not write another letter! It will only make the congestion worse. If you have a problem that can't wait, call us instead.

In the meantime, you can ensure a faster response by separating your correspondence with us by category. That is, if you have a question about your membership, put it in a separate letter from your catalog request. Put all your game questions in one letter, and identify clearly which game system you are asking about. (Not everyone here plays the games, so the more clearly you identify the subject of your inquiry, the less chance there is of it going to the wrong department.) The more departments your letter has to be sent to, the longer it will take for you to receive your reply.

If you want us to respond in writing, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a reply. Priority is given to answering letters with self-addressed stamped envelope, and due to the sheer volume of mail (over 200 letters/week), we often do not get to the others at all.

Catalogs

Many of you have written to ask for your Mail Order Hobby Shop catalogs so that you can order gaming merchandise with the 10% RPGA Network discount. The Mail Order Hobby Shop has had a problem with getting its new catalog printed, and it will not be available until spring. As soon as they are in, the Hobby Shop will do a mass mailing to all RPGA members. Until then, we cannot provide you with a full listing of their merchandise.

However, if we can arrange it, a few pages of the next POLYHEDRON Newszine will be devoted to a "mini-catalog" and order form. We will not be able to list all the stock available from the Mail Order Hobby Shop since their catalog is longer than our newszine, but we will list the RPGA members-only products and as many of the most popular items as we can.

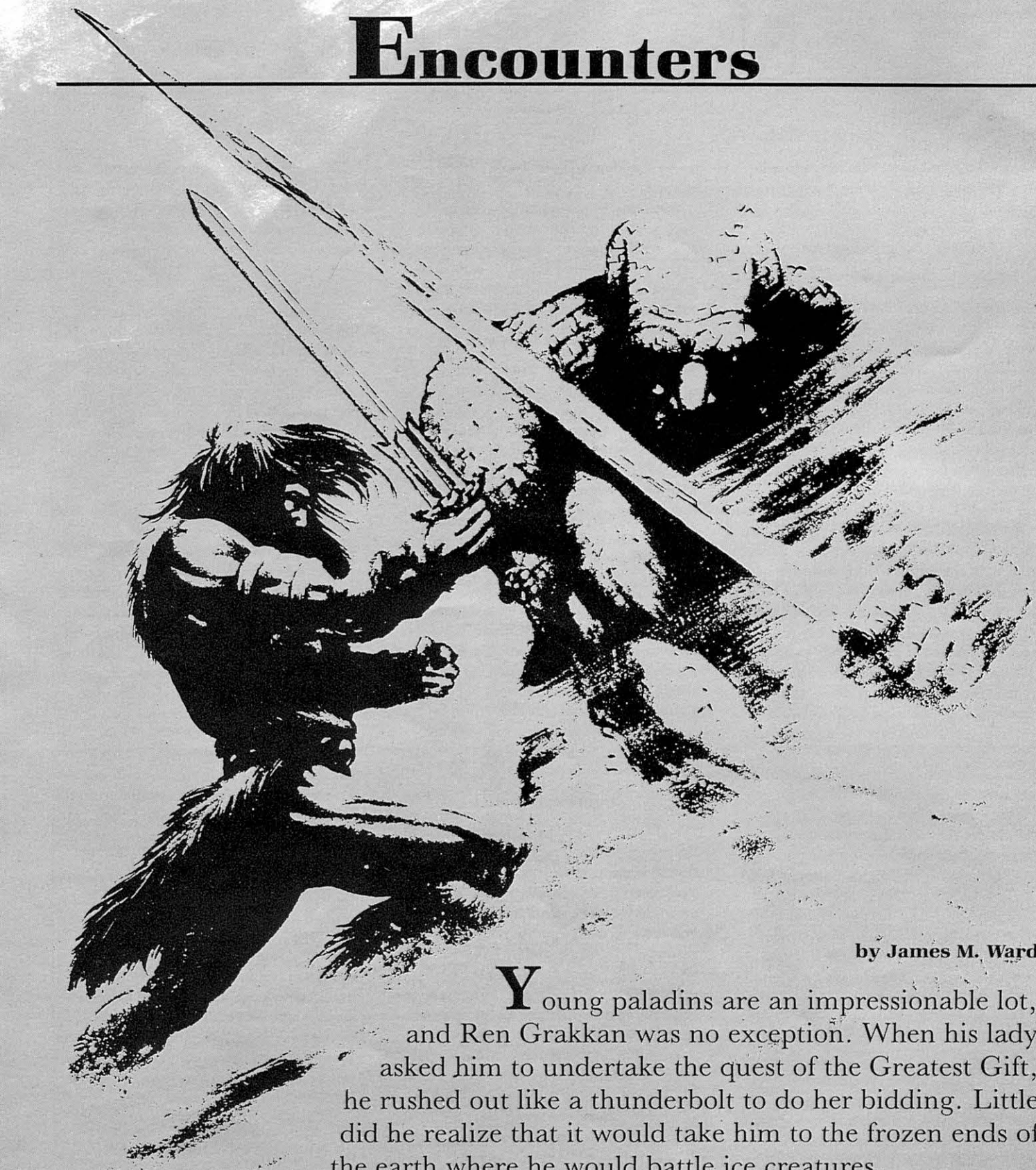
Tournament Rankings

The new International Scoring Points system is still under construction. We expect to release the details of the new system and the latest convention rankings in the next issue. We think you'll like the many ways to participate and accumulate points, because you can have fun at the same time!

Until next issue,

Best Witches!
Penny Petticord

Encounters



by James M. Ward

Young paladins are an impressionable lot, and Ren Grakkan was no exception. When his lady asked him to undertake the quest of the Greatest Gift, he rushed out like a thunderbolt to do her bidding. Little did he realize that it would take him to the frozen ends of the earth where he would battle ice creatures.

Her heart's desire was to possess the most potent of all artifacts, the *white cloak of enchanting*. Ren didn't know where it was or what guarded it, but when his lady spoke, he acted. He vowed that it would be in her soft hands before the next rising of the full moon.

Through the expenditure of over half his wealth and with the use of a sage, Ren discovered the location of the cloak. Years before, the cloak had been stolen during a blizzard from its rightful owner, a powerful barbarian lord from the snowy northlands. The barbarian and all of his retainers were killed during the attack by things called "ice creatures."

The cloak resides in the mountain den of the humanoids, guarded by those who stole it. Naturally, the knowledge of these terrible adversaries didn't daunt Ren in the slightest.

Ren paid a hippogriff and its rider a large sum to transport him to the site at the base of the mountain of ice. Three-quarters of the way there, they double-crossed him and left him with only the items on his back, leading him to realize the true nature of neutrals.

Out of necessity, he captured and tamed a wooly mammoth. The only things that kept him alive in the frigid wastelands were his *flame tongue* sword and the body heat of the creature he rode. He was determined that nothing would keep him from his quest.

The mountain of ice and the cave at its base were easy to find. Unfortunately for Ren, the ice creatures were equally easy to find.

Ren Grakkan
RACE/SEX: *Human male*
ARMOR CLASS: *0*
HIT POINTS: *49*
FIGHTER: *4th-level paladin*
MOVE: *12"*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *2-8/2-16*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *+2 on save, immune to diseases*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
SIZE: *M (5'9")*
ALIGNMENT: *Lawful good*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 18 (76%) I: 9 W: 13
D: 18 C: 18 CH: 17

Bonuses: +2 to hit/+4 on damage, +1,500 wt. allowance, 1-4 to open doors, 30% bend bars/lift gates, +3 missiles/attack adj., -4 def. adjustment

Magic items: *bracers of defense* (AC 4), *flame tongue* +1/+3 versus cold

Unadjusted THACO = 18

The scene

At the foot of a mile-high mountain of ice is a huge cave. The glaring sun bounces off of sheets of ice everywhere. At the entrance to this cave stands a nine-foot-tall ice humanoid. The creature holds a shard-spear of ice in its hands and is clearly ready to defend the cave entrance. At its cone-shaped feet lie the bones of several other adventurers. You move forward a half step, and the ice lumbers toward you, waving its weapon threateningly.

DM information

The cave

An ice guards the entrance, but it is slow and can be manuevered around. The cave has a slide at the entrance that glides down for 100 feet. Ren must make four checks of his Dexterity to see if he manages to keep from slipping. If he rolls more than his Dexterity, he falls and is affected by the ice spears at the bottom of the slide.

The DM rolls 1d6 spears hitting Ren for 1d4 points of damage per spear.

At this point the character may see tunnels to his left and right. The tunnel to the right is filled with two lumbering ices who are moving toward the intruder. The tunnel to the left curves out of sight a few paces from the entrance, but a bright glow from its depths reflects around the corner.

The area from which the two ice creatures emerge contains seven ice statues of fighters in various poses of battle. The bright glow in the other section is cast by the cloak; it lies on three half-formed ices. If the cloak is grasped, the ice underneath it will create a fall of ice which will do 4d8 points of damage. If the cloak is carefully lifted and the creatures underneath are somehow dealt with before the cloak is fully off of them, the ice fall will not occur.

The ices move and attack so slowly that it is possible to move past them and trust to luck that they won't hit.

Ices
FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: *1*
ARMOR CLASS: *3*
MOVE: *6"*
HIT DICE: *8, 12, or 16*
% IN Lair: *Nil*
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: *3-36*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Cold*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *+1 or better weapon to hit*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Low*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *L*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil/nil*
Level/X.P. VALUE: *VII/2850 + 15/hp*

Ice creatures can mainly be found on the Para-elemental Plane of Cold. They are slow-moving creatures of low intelligence. Ice creatures invariably create icy slides to guard their dens, and place their treasures in small alcoves guarded by falling ice traps.

Ice para-elementals have a funny cultural quirk of making sculptures of the enemies they've vanquished. These statues are almost always perfect reproductions of the foes they've faced. An ice's physical ability and prowess can be easily determined by the number of sculptures it has in its den.

Ices require powerful magic items to reproduce their kind; they seek out these items in a one hundred-mile radius around their dens. The mere presence of fully charged wands or miscellaneous magic items will slowly attract other of their kind to the source of magic.

Fire-based attacks do double damage to ice creatures. Those coming within ten feet of a creature take 1-4 points of damage per round due to the intense cold that surrounds its being.

White cloak of charming

This unusually white cloak will increase the magical effectiveness of several types of spells. It will modify the saving throws by -2 on all illusionist spells. It modifies by -3 all *hold, charm, suggestion,* and *confusion* spells of the magic-user. These spells are further modified by a factor of -1 when worn by a female.

Final notes

If Ren succeeds in bringing this item back to his lady love, her face will fill with the joy of the gift. But in years to come, the winters in their land will become unusually harsh. It is quite possible that someday during the worst of blizzards, something big, mean, and ugly may come knocking at her door.

OBSERVATIONS FROM A VETERAN GAMER

by Sonny Scott

I have been involved with playing the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game since 1977, and over the years I have developed some views I feel will be of interest to the other members of the RPGA™ Network.

To me, there is only one firm rule in running or playing an ADVANCED DUNGEON & DRAGONS® game — it must be *fun*; for the DM as well as for the players. If the game isn't fun, then not only will it be a short game, but over a period of time you will find fewer and fewer people taking the time to come over and play.

The Basics

First of all, you need an experienced, informed DM. If the DM doesn't know the material and the game rules, the action will rapidly bog down while the DM looks up rules or reads the mate A good DM tries to "KISS" (Keep It Simple, Stupid). Don't try to add extra rules, special magic, or new and different tables. Try to avoid using monsters you are not familiar with. Unusual things can be fun, but too many of them can slow down the flow of play.

You may be tempted at first to add super-powerful NPCs or opponents, but resist the inclination. Far from giving you more control over the situation, you will find that the more power you add to your game, the more out of control it will become. Like any world, the stronger your opponents and friends become, the stronger *you* will have to be in order to survive. In the end, someone will become so powerful that no one else can be tolerated to exist in the same world.

Participation

Make sure everyone gets a chance to be in on the action. To keep everyone interested, keep the parties small and friendly. I have run games with anywhere from one player to twenty, and I feel that groups of four to eight make for the best quality gaming. Groups of less than four force the players to be very creative, or play two characters. When a player is forced to divide his attention between two characters, he does not have time to enjoy what is happening in the game. Conversely, groups of more than eight leave the players with too much time on their hands between moves.

Players hate to wait. This can be a problem in problem in smaller groups if the DM allows single members of the group to wander around without the others. It has been my experience that the players have more fun if they can all stay involved. No one likes to wait and do nothing while the DM resolves issues for another player. At times it is important to let the players pursue solo activities, but try to keep the solo play outside the regular gaming sessions as much as possible, and let the games involve *all* the players.

There is some argument that if players break off, things will happen to them that the rest of the group will not know about. If you think the non-participating players will not find out what happened to the player who went off by himself, I've got some land I want to talk to you about.

For the DM

In closing, I want to touch on DM enjoyment. When you involve numerous tables and charts, you do not have enough time to interact with players. Make sure you give your NPCs different qualities and lifestyles so you can encourage interaction with the players. At first you may feel funny trying to sound like a girl or an old man, but try anyway. Not only will the game become more enjoyable for everyone, but you may learn it's fun to be some else.

When you set up your game, try looking around your everyday life for people to base your NPCs on. Watch and listen to older people and merchants. Watch your friends in school and try to learn what makes people do what they do. Then apply it to your game. NPCs are more fun if they behave like real people.

If you use a few of the suggestions I've made today, I think you will find that you and your friends will get much more enjoyment out of your games. I know it is not always possible to implement every new idea, but try out any you think will be useful to you.

Good luck and good gaming!

Why gargoyles don't have Wings but should

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by Gary Gygax

Unlike in the past few years, I was not scheduled against the RPGA™ Network meeting this year at GEN CON® XVII game fair. Wonder of wonders . . . and I actually showed up at the event too! What's all this got to do with gargoyles, with or without wings, you are understandably asking at this moment. So bear with me a moment. It isn't often that I get to fill up space in the Hallowed pages of this Exalted publication. I'll get around to monsters in a few paragraphs already.

While at the convention, I was virtually bombarded with questions and requests for material. The answers to the most frequently asked questions will be (or have already been) in DRAGON® Magazine. After so many requests, I went back home and rapped a half-dozen or so short pieces to appear under the old "Sorcerer's Scroll" column heading. What I promised for POLYHEDRON™ Newszine was a series of articles detailing the map of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ campaign setting. I am currently working to put together information on Greyhawk city and environs, the Cairn Hills area, and then whatever strikes my fancy — or some worthy fellow RPGAer requests. That will begin in a future issue. Frequency might be sporadic, as my autumn-spring schedule is most demanding and includes several long trips to distant parts of the world. (So much for cop-outs.)

My chief collaborator these days is one Flint Dille, a screen writer, game enthusiast, and history buff. Flint's grandfather created Buck Rogers (and Flint currently has a film script on Buck which is now in the hands of his agent — perhaps there'll be a new feature film coming one of these fine days; the script is exciting — far better than any of the material done to date, in my opinion), while Flint himself has been the writer for quite a number of animated shows and has put in some time for George Lucas. Anyway, as an "exclusive" for RPGA Network members, Flint and I have just signed a contract with the Wanderer Book division of Simon & Schuster for four HEROES CHALLENGE™ Game-Books. The hero of the saga is one Sagard, a young barbarian. Although these works will be in the S&S juvenile book line, reading level and interaction is far higher than anything vaguely like them currently on the market. I think many of you will enjoy reading/playing these adventures. All four will appear under the auspices of Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corporation and should be available around the spring of 1985.

By the way, action takes place on Yarth, a place somewhat similar to Oerth, the setting of Greyhawk, et. al. It has fewer magical properties than Oerth but more than Earth. It is not impossible that additional works will be contracted for in months to come, action being set on Yarth or perhaps another alternate world, Aerth. On Earth, magic is virtually non-existent. On Uerth, dweomers are weak, chancy things. Yarth has a sprinkling of things magical, Aerth is highly magical, and Oerth is pure magic.

So, have you ever noticed that while gargoyles can fly, according to the stats in the AD&D® *Monster Manual*, the illustration shows the critter sans aerial appendages? (Don't try to tell me those dark shadows are wings!) Sure you have, and I am not too pleased about it either. What the heck, it's an older work, and such mistakes will happen. Hey! Wait a minute! I just took a gander at the nasty Margoyle. It has great spikes, but no wings either? What the heck is going on, anyway? I screwed up the name, spelling it correctly on the heading as MARLGOYLE, but then laziness set in, for twice in the text I dropped the bloody L, so now we have an (incorrect) MARGOYLE — but what about its wings? MM II is a superior work, in my opinion, and I do hope that some future edition will show nice leathery wings on both the gargoyle and its cousin, the mar(l)goyle!

Being reptilian, sort of, gargoyles lay eggs. Once every two to five years, depending on feeding conditions, the female lays a clutch of two to eight eggs in some high and inaccessible place, such as a grotto, cave, or the like. These eggs are small at first, being about the size of ostrich eggs. They absorb the minerals from the stone on which they rest, growing about one inch in radius every month during their twelve-month incubation period. Alone and unattended, the young gargoyles hatch, forcing horn and claw through the thick sides of the hard shells in order to take their places among the rest of their kind. After a few minutes drying out and resting, the fledgling gargoyle monsters are ready for first flight and feeding. If any of their number are small and weak, the others will fall upon it and devour it before taking off.

Feeding on whatever is available, the immature gargoyles grow with amazing rapidity, and within a week or two are large enough to associate with mature individuals without fear of cannibalization. Early diet includes insects, rodents, fungi, and just about anything else which is discovered — animal or vegetable. Usually, three or four fledglings will survive from each clutch to join the adult "horde." Left unmolested, a gargoyle will live at least 200 years, reaching maturity in one year, and attaining full size in about 10-45 years, depending on feeding conditions. Size, measured in hit points, is as follows:

1 1/2′ = 8 hp newly hatched
2′ = 12 hp 1-4 weeks old
2 1/2′ = 16 hp 1-4 months old
3 1/2′ = 18 hp 5-11 months old
5′ = 20 hp 1-4 years age
5 1/2′ = 24 hp 5-10 years old
6′ = 28 hp 11-40 years old
6 1/2′ = 32 to 36 hp 41 years or older

Next issue the mar(l)goyle . . . and one more!

There have been quite a number of you of late who've contacted TSR or me personally to mention something odd. The general theme of these reports has been an inability to find the TSR product line in the shops which you customarily purchased them. There is too much smoke for there not to be a fire! Now, admittedly, TSR sold out of the D&D® Companion set, INDIANA JONES™ and MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ games almost before they hit the shelves. These products will be back soon — undoubtedly by the time you read this. However, complaints of shortages talk about modules, hardbound books, and so on. Here's what to do if you are experiencing the same problem: Go to the manager of the store where you normally purchase products and tell him that you are disappointed that no (whatever the product is) is available from that place. Then tell him that unless they rectify this soon, you will have to go to some other outlet for your gaming needs. That should wake the manager up and get proper merchandise into the place once again. On TSR's end, we are jumping all over our sales reps and customers to make certain this sort of problem not only stops but doesn't occur again.

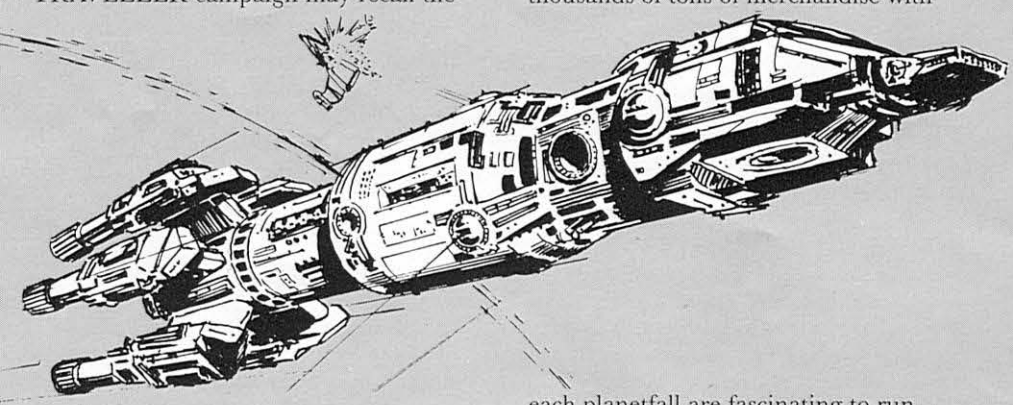
Take Command of a Titan!

"Big Ship" campaigns in the STAR FRONTIERS® game

by Roger E. Moore

Even though this is a STAR FRONTIERS® game article, it will start with some thoughts about the TRAVELLER® game, by Game Designers' Workshop. One of the oldest science-fiction RPGs on the market, the TRAVELLER system developed some fascinating game concepts that can be applied to virtually any other science-fiction campaign. One of its most interesting adventure settings was that of the Big Ship campaign.

Those who have been involved in a TRAVELLER campaign may recall the *Leviathan* and *Azhanti High Lightning* starship supplements, in which a large merchant craft and a titanic-sized warship, respectively, were drawn out and detailed to the *n*th degree. Entire campaigns could be organized around these mighty ships, with players taking the roles of the numerous crewmen manning the bridge, gun turrets, computer stations, small craft, exploration teams, repair crews, and so on. If characters die in combat or disaster, new characters may be drawn from the ship's crew or by recruiting at any nearby planet. The starship itself is the core of the campaign; men come and go, but the ship lives on. . . .



The thrill of having a Big Ship is hard to match. No longer will pirates get away with ripping off your puny merchant ship; instead, they'll get a taste of laser firepower that can peel the rock off an asteroid. You have the advantage of a large crew and many supplies, and you can often get a few other smaller ships to serve as backup scouts and escorts. A Big Ship campaign is a unique experience.

Choosing a Big Ship

Having decided to try a Big Ship campaign, the first (and most important) question is, which sort of Big Ship will be used in the adventures? This decision will require input from all of the players, as they will be the ones to suffer through the scenarios. Some of the possible campaign options that may be taken include:

Merchant ships. Large-sized merchant craft that pick up and offload hundreds or thousands of tons of merchandise with each planetfall are fascinating to run, particularly for players who like to calculate total profits on their pocket calculators. Anyone with a bend toward accounting (or greed) will like this set up; it's nice to be rich.

Interestingly, many science-fiction games are organized so that it is difficult to make a loss on a run, no matter what cargo the ship is carrying. The referee may wish to adjust this to give players a little trouble now and then, but making money is the major reason that most players will take this campaign route.

Merchant starships in STAR FRONTIERS gaming are generally of two types, either spaceliners (passenger haulers) or freighters; some notes on them appear on p. 6 of the Campaign Book that comes with the Knight Hawks set. Spaceliners are great if the players and referee want lots of action as well as lots of money. All sorts of weird and dangerous characters can be picked up (including hijackers and assassins).

Note that freighters might prove somewhat boring, since they involve low crew sizes and (sadly) freighters are not well armed and aren't very maneuverable. However, a heavily-armed freighter that makes specialized runs (possibly during a Sathar war) could prove enjoyable to base a campaign around.

Smaller merchant ships could venture into unexplored star systems to open up trade with new cultures or colonies, thus doubling as scouts (see below). This sort of adventure was the major purpose of the *Leviathan* adventure mentioned above, and interested players and referees should examine a copy of that booklet for more information.

Exploration and scout ships. Exciting, long running adventures can be organized around scouting crews who are sent out to new star systems to search for habitable (or inhabited) worlds. The players will have thousands of adventures open up for them as they explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilizations — you know the rest.

The demand on the game referee, however, could be immense. Whole worlds would have to be invented with each adventure, and the creative demand to put together unique and enjoyable scenarios would be enormous. It would help for the referee to have access to scientific journals and texts on other planets and solar systems, and a good supply of science-fiction novels describing unusual new worlds that could be adapted into the campaign would also be of value.

One interesting variant on this theme might be to have a giant starship become lost in the galaxy by some means. Perhaps a Big Ship passed too close to a black hole or other space-warping phenomenon in the Void; when it exited the Void, it wasn't where it was supposed to be (by several thousand light years!) In this situation, the lost ship's crew will know they will not be able to return home again in their lifetimes. But — they can explore and settle the area they are in, and begin a new human civilization in a remote part of the galaxy. What alien worlds and dangers will they encounter? The possibilities are endless.

A final thought: Referees are referred to module SFKH 2, *Mutiny on the Eleanor Moraes*, for some thoughts on major complications that could develop on long-range scouting missions.

Warships and privateers. The Second Sathar War has started, and you and your friends are in command of the battleship UPFS *Admiral Morgaine,* the heart and soul of Task Force Prenglar. All that lies between you and victory is the entire Sathar fleet, and the Sathar feel the same way about you as you feel about them. . . .

Using details from the STAR FRONTIERS Campaign Book (pgs. 55-60), the referee can create a major campaign in which the players role-play their way through the planning, preparations, fighting, and adventure of the Sathar wars. If the Sathar are too "tame," then there are Mechanons and other hostile aliens to battle, pirate bases to locate and destroy, and convoys to escort and protect. Perhaps some smaller Big Ships of assault scout, frigate, or light cruiser size will receive special missions to scout enemy forces, run blockades, and conduct surprise attacks on enemy positions.

Other campaign backgrounds are suggested by the information in SFKH 1, *Dramune Run*, in which the tension between Inner Reach and Outer Reach explodes in the Dramune War, and by *The Warriors of White Light*, the mission brief included with the Knight Hawks game. The latter is further described below and includes a series of adventures for small Big Ships.

The possibility of inter-corporate rivalries exploding into warfare must also be considered; after all, there was "Laco's War." Some interesting information on corporate conflicts in space may be found in module SF 4, *Mission to Alcazzar*, and in DRAGON® Magazine #88 ("Yachts and Privateers Return," p. 82), both sources by Doug Niles. A two-part series on corporations and their wars in the Frontier Sector will appear in DRAGON Magazine issues #89-90, written by Kim Eastland, and will provide valuable background information on the "company wars."

Private ships and others. The least "confining" of all Big Ship adventure campaigns would be, of course, ones centered around privately-owned ships that can go anywhere the crew wants. One or more of the player characters should be rich enough (from previous adventuring or by the referee's ruling) to have a giant starship constructed for a select crew to go wandering in. The ship's crew may then dabble in military, mercantile, or exploratory affairs, as they choose.

The "Yachts and Privateers Return" article from DRAGON® Magazine #89, mentioned above, has information on the larger private yachts that sail the Frontier Sector's stars. Developing a suitable adventuring background for the campaign would prove easier in this instance than in the above ones, as the player characters themselves have control over their future plans. It could prove difficult at times to get everyone to agree with the same plans, however, but generally there should be little problem in coordinating the group's interstellar activities.

References and aids

A list of game aids that may prove helpful for running or gaming in a Big Ship campaign follows. Some of these products were designed for game systems other than the STAR FRONTIERS game, but the organizational material and gaming hints they have can be invaluable.

STAR FRONTIERS® game aids

Knight Hawks — The starship expansion rules for the STAR FRONTIERS game. Obviously essential for any Big Ship campaigns in this system. The mini-module that comes with this set, *The Warriors of White Light,* is required reading for the scenario ideas and organization it gives to starship campaigns.

SFKH1: *Dramune Run* — The first Knight Hawks module, this adventure lays much groundwork for running starships as the core of the campaign. The merchant ship provided in the adventure is only hull size 6, but a good referee can extrapolate from the information provided, particularly the excellent Ship Log layout on p. 13, when designing larger ships and the adventures to go with them.

TRAVELLER® game aids

Book 5, *High Guard* — Though only those who are familiar with this game system will understand most of the material here, this booklet does provide some interesting detail on crewing and operating major starships. The shipbuilding system used here is of little use in STAR FRONTIERS gaming, but the list of things that ships can be outfitted with might make interesting reading.

Supplement 9, *Fighting Ships* — A fascinating look at what the TRAVELLER game calls *big*. This booklet can give players some wonderful ideas on how to construct their own Big Ship, if allowed to do so by the referee. Beware of the half-million ton monsters, though. . . .

Adventure 1, *The Kinunir* — On the "small" side of the Big Ship scale, the military starship described here has numerous adventures centering around it that could be adopted into other game systems with ease. The idea of gaining a Big Ship by salvage (with the associated dangers) is explored, and a crew roster is given that details where the crewmen might be found at any particular time (useful for NPCs).

Adventure 4, *Leviathan* — Absolutely required reading, even if you don't play TRAVELLER games. Superb detailing of a major starship (though still on the "medium small" end of the scale), its crew, and a selection of adventures that will last through many games.

Game 3, *Azhanti High Lightning* — To my knowledge, this is the most expansive set of starship deckplans ever done. A BIG ship, the *Azhanti High Lightning* class cruiser masses 60,000 tons and is satisfyingly huge enough to please anyone. This game is also required reading for anyone who thinks that running a Big Ship campaign might be easy. It isn't, but the payoff can be enormous. The enclosed booklet (Supplement 5, *Lightning Class Cruisers*) is worth the cost of the game itself and presents much useable information on crewing major starships and keeping them going. The adventuring possibilities described are outstanding and far-reaching.

STAR TREK®: The Role-Playing Game

The best known of all Big Ships in science fiction may be the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. Though the game has little to do with the STAR FRONTIERS system, the "Starship Combat" section of the rulebook presents what is probably the best starship command system for gaming purposes there is. *All* of the players can take roles as important ship's officers and have an effect on combat. All too often it seems that only the one or two players controlling the guns have anything to do while firing away at the enemy; STAR FRONTIERS game players can adopt the STAR TREK combat system or some variant of it into their campaigns to give players more of a chance to work together.

The next issue of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine will present more information on Big Ship campaigns, as well as a Big Ship that can be used as the foundation for STAR FRONTIERS game adventures — the frigate Pini Pedikord, *the terror of the spacelanes.*

SPELLING BEE

by Frank Mentzer

Hope you liked the Tomb (issue #20). Any survivors?

It's been a while since I had time to rattle on about spells, so let's stick to miscellaneous notes on magic-user spells for now. These comments are more for DMs than players, though both can profit.

DMG Notes

Take a few minutes and copy the notes from the DMG (pp 41-47) into your Players' Handbook. At the very least, footnote each spell affected. These modifications to spells are often overlooked, even by good DMs. Some of the most influential:

Detect Magic: Magic-users, note the chance of determining the type of magic: a hefty 10% per level of the character. This can be an important clue to guessing what an unknown but detected magical effect will do. If you know it's an Evocation, avoid it; it'll probably blow up. Magic items bear Enchantments; their effects may be otherwise, but the item is what's detected, not its capabilities.

Unseen servant: Though the force has no shape, it can hold a reasonable 20 pounds. Try using it as a "pincushion" to keep daggers, arrows, potions, etc. handy for fast use. Note, however, that it's a force, not a creature, and thus cannot be harmed by *magic missile* or other spells affecting creatures only. This is a very handy spell for ranger lords. (With thanks to Skip Williams, who plays in my weekly campaign.)

Minor globe of invulnerability: You can see this effect when it's up. Enemy magic-users will watch for and recognize it. It cannot be made invisible.

Cloudkill: The PH says that this has no effect on creatures of over 6 Hit Dice, but note this amendment (damage 1d10 per round while within the cloud). This can be alleviated by an iridescent *ioun stone* (no air needed), but not by much else.

Wall of iron: The PH says 15 square feet per level of the caster, but note that 30 square feet per level can be obtained by halving the thickness.

Stone to flesh: Though a cylindrical block of flesh can be created in solid stone, the flesh is not a creature (for purposes of various spell applications) and is not living matter.

Phase door: Note that this is *not* detectable by *detect invisibility* or any normal vision.

Other Notes

Comprehend Languages: Put this up, touch a creature, and you can understand it. You *can't* speak its language. The *helm* with this asset works in the same way.

Coping with glyphs: Any decent level cleric can cast *glyphs of warding* all over the place; it only takes time (but minimal to no expense as long as the *glyph* covers less than 50 square feet). These things can be quite a nuisance, especially in a largish dungeon or castle where a few hundred of them could lie around waiting for intruders. (The inhabitants talk a lot as they walk around, but that's life in a magic world.)

An *erase* spell can sometimes work on a cleric's *glyph of warding* — but who carries an *erase* spell when there's all those other wonderful first level spells? With *detect invisibility, glyphs* are obvious; the mage can describe the *glyph* to a cleric in the party, who might recognize it and know the right word. This should always succeed if the caster of the *glyph* is of the same alignment as your cleric and of the same or lesser level. The DM should decide chances otherwise, based on similarity of alignment, difference in levels, etc. And if all that still doesn't produce success, a *dispel magic* could work. At worst, put up a *polymorph self* and go; if the *glyphs* just cause damage, that's repaired easily enough by a few "shifts". (Then again, if they're more powerful, you're in trouble...it depends on where you find them.)

Enlarge: Can't get through a one-way door? Out of *knock* spells? Toss an *enlarge* or *reduce* on the problem. If size is increased, it'll splinter out, make a lot of noise, and block a lot of space. If the size is reduced, it (and probably its hinges) will make a little noise, fall, and can probably be caught—and possibly carried around.

Lightning Bolt: Unless used in a remarkably sturdy dungeon, adjudicate rebounds carefully. The spell notes specifically that it "will set fire to combustibles, sunder wooden doors, splinter up to 1' thickness of stone and melt metals...(lead, gold, copper, silver, bronze)."

This is one of the nastiest things you can throw at a party, even if the damage is minimal; most items don't save very well against lightning. Even my high level campaign characters dread the prospect of electrical attack, for this very reason.

Unfortunately, only a behir or a storm giant (or a magic-user or druid) can produce lightning magically; however, any creature able to use magic-user spells can use a *wand of lightning*.

If you're feeling nasty, use lightning as a follow-up attack after engaging the party with a creature immune to it—like an algoid, boggart, galeb duhr, gelatinous cube, grell, groaning spirit, mihstu, olive slime, roper, shocker, or umpleby; or use something else that actually benefits from lightning, like a black pudding, flesh golem, iron golem, mustard jelly, ochre jelly, or shambling mound. And remember: a demon, vampire, xaren, or xorn only takes 1/2 damage from lightning.

No Nukes: Your high-level mage casts two 7th level spells—a *delayed blast fireball* followed by a *vanish* — and blows up the library of his arch-enemy, right? Wrong. Once cast, the *d.b.f.* is magic, not matter (although it seems to be a gem-like pebble), and the *vanish* (a *teleport object* effect) affects creatures or objects, not magical forces. If the magic is "tied" to an object or creature, fine; but you can't *teleport* a *d.b.f., wall of force*, or other magical effect alone.

Paralysis: A character can perform various things by concentration alone; *fly*, for example (while a potion or spell effect is running). Paralysis incapacitates the voluntary nervous system, but not the autonomic (otherwise the victim would be asphyxiated). Presumably, the victim can still think normally. So couldn't a paralyzed character concentrate effectively — gaining all that that implies?

More to come later. What do **you** want to see? Communicate!

For the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game

WITCHSTONE

by Carl Smith

An adventure for 5-7 characters at levels 8-12

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Player Background
The Mission

Bywater is a quiet town on the White River near the hills which separate the civilized lands from the mountain wilderness. Long ago this lowland area by the river was won from the hill giants and forged into the empire by the might of a hero named Garvin Iron-hand. He protected the small human settlement and drove back the giants time and time again with his mighty blade Fersil, against which no giant cound stand. At last, the hill giant chieftain saw the wisdom of cooperation and swore peace with Bywater.

The old chief was as good as his word, and peace endured long after Iron-hand's death. But now the giants are on the rampage again. With no hero to protect it, Bywater has been nearly destroyed by the unexplained attacks of the giants. Because of the reports of strange happenings and unusual magical phenomena connected with the attacks, the king has decided to send a team of professional adventurers to investigate the source of the trouble and restore a lasting peace between Bywater and its large neighbors.

Bywater

It is early winter when you arrive at Bywater. The White River has disappeared completely, leaving only an muddy, half-frozen riverbed to show where it used to flow. Beyond it lie the Ragged Woods; beyond them are the Stone Trees, and ultimately the Hills of the Giants, sillouetted against the mountains which loom forbiddingly in the distance.

Bywater looked serene enough at first view. But as you came closer, you could see the scarred walls and battered gates that told the mute story of a city fighting for its very life. In two or three areas, the mighty walls had been breached, leaving only piles of rubble.

Inside the walls lay a city besieged. Buildings were randomly smashed, their timbers sticking up through mud and bricks like broken bones. Thatching was torn, burned, and scattered. The few city guardsmen left on the walls stared at you with dark-circled eyes before returning their gaze to the distant hills, where signal fires burned here and there. There were giant, muddy footprints almost two feet long at the gates and all along the outer walls. Stones too large to have fallen from the collapsed buildings littered the street.

Two men were conversing in sober tones by the city gate when you arrived. Turning to face you with hope in their eyes, they identified themselves as the burgermeister and the captain of the city guard. "You are the reinforcements sent by the king? You are just in time. Last night's raid nearly killed us all."

"Before the hill giants' attack, there was little here", continued the burgermeister sadly. "Since the giants have been marauding, there is even less. People leave in droves, more anxious to save their lives than their meager possessions. Please help us. We stand no chance unless you stop the raids soon."

The guard captain took you through the town and out to the river to survey the damage. "I don't know if we can take any more", he said. "They've been at us almost a week. Every time they attack we kill some, but that doesn't seem to do any good. There are always more to take their places."

Turning back toward the town, he muttered,"They may destroy Bywater tonight. Last night they got up to the walls — I don't think we can take another night like that.

"I've seen it all, but this is the worst. I don't like hill giants, but I can handle them — at least, I always could before. I saw HER last night — tall as a house she was, bigger than some of the male giants. At her command, rocks came flying out of nowhere by themselves and smashed into the walls. She's a witch, just like the stories said. She raised her hand, and that amulet she wore flashed — then the stones rained down on us. It's magic." The guard commander shook his head sadly, "It's magic, and we can't deal with that ourselves. But if you could take care of the witch, we can probably deal with the rest. In fact, they might even agree to peace. They're no more eager for war than we are. It's HER that keeps them after us. They're all afraid of her — and I don't blame them.

"You'll need Fersil to slay the witch", continued the captain. That's Garvin Iron-hand's magic sword — the one that kills giants. We couldn't pry it out of his hands when he died, so it was buried with him. Garvin's tomb is about a mile down the North Trail in the Ragged Woods. The old cleric put some kind of magical protections on it before he died, so be careful. Good luck!" With that, the captain turned back to the barracks and disappeared from view.

Background for the DM
The Story

The old chieftain is dead. The hill giants are now under the leadership of the mad giantess, Maezera. Hungry for power, she plotted and schemed in secret with her son, a giant troll, to kill the old chief and take over the tribe.

Realizing that the giants would not be likely to take orders from a female, and knowing that she could not win the leadership through combat as was the custom, Maezera devised a plan to convince the rest of the tribe that she had fearful arcane powers by arranging a few strange occurences that looked like magic. Then, in a master stroke, she announced that if the chief did not turn over the leadership to her, she would make the very river stop flowing. When he refused to give in, Maezera and the giant troll went into the mountains one night and dammed up White River at its source, channeling its flow down the other side of the mountains.

Convinced that Maezera was a witch, the chief became frightened. The burgermeister of Bywater refused to get involved when the chief requested help in destroying this menace to both of them, so the chief decided to "borrow" Fersil from Iron-hand's tomb in the Petrified Forest, knowing that even Maezera could not stand up to that. But he failed to reckon with the magical protections set by the local priests to guard the tomb of their hero, and was killed by one of the clay golems set at the entrance.

Unbeknownst to the chief, Maezera and her son had followed him, intending lay an ambush, and saw him defeated. Seizing the opportunity, they stripped the old chief's body and burned it, then returned to the hills to inform the other giants that their chief had been killed by her magical *fireball*.

To keep up her mysterious appearance and prevent the other giants from growing too curious about her "powers", Maezera has set up a few additional parlor tricks throughout the old chieftain's cavern complex, where she and her son now reside. The only real magic she has available is her carpet of flying, which gives her the mobility she needs to escape when danger threatens.

For defense, Maezera has used part of the old chief's treasure to hire 40 mercenary ogres, who take turns patrolling, standing guard duty inside Maezera's cave complex, and operating the catapults for the siege.

Maezera is determined to drive the humans from the lowlands and reclaim the area for the giants. She plans to level the town as an example to all who would take land from the hill giants. Maezera is not interested in making peace with the humans, although she may use negotiation as an excuse to lure the adventurers to her lair if they constitute a serious threat to her plans.

Upon the death of the witch, the son of the old chief will assume leadership of the tribe and negotiate terms of peace with Bywater.

Bywater

Upon questioning, the burgermeister will reveal that the old chief visited 2 weeks earlier and requested assistance. The burgermeister didn't believe his story of a witch in the tribe, since everyone knows giants have no spellcasting powers. The old chief has not been seen since.

Running the Siege

The White River was Bywater's major supply line. Since it stopped flowing, several attempts have been made to bring in supplies overland, but all have been intercepted by the hill giants. Food and other supplies are currently being rationed to the remaining inhabitants, but there is only about 1 week's worth left. The town is slowly being evacuated, as more and more of its inhabitants attempt to escape.

If the characters set out for Maezera's cave immediately, go directly to the encounter key. If they choose to stay in town and witness an assault, use the standard information given below to run the attack. Modify the composition and strategy of the standard force as needed for any subsequent attacks. Remember that Maezera is an intelligent opponent, and will compensate for changes in the town's defenses.

If Maezera's attack force is seriously depleted, she will cease direct assaults on Bywater until the characters leave. After a day or two, she will send a message inviting the characters to her cave to discuss terms of peace, in order to lure them out of Bywater and destroy them. Use the encounter key for the trip to the caves.

Bywater's Defenses

The city is surrounded by a 40′ high rectangular wall with a tower on each corner and crenellations along the top. Standard defensive equipment and weapons are available.

A small military force, consisting of the guard captain and 50 men-at-arms, remains to defend the city. Assume that the giants kill 15 of the men-at-arms with each assault unless modifications are made in the city's defenses or the composition and strategy of the assault force.

Captain: 1, AC 2, MV 12, F5, AT 1, Dmg by weapon, STs14/STw11, THAC0 16, hp 42. The captain wears *plate mail +1* and carries a *longsword +2*. Other magic: 3 *potions of extra-healing*, 1 *ring of warmth*.

Men-at-arms: 50, AC 5, MV 9, F0, AT 1, Dmg by weapon, STs19/STw16, THAC0 20, hp 2 each.

Assault force

Each night the giants bring the following standard force down from the hills by the East Trail to attack the town.

Hill giants: 12, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8+1, AT 1, Dmg 2d8, STs11/STw8, THAC0 12; hp 20, 35, 35, 42, 46, 48, 50, 50, 53, 55, 60, 63. Throw rocks for 2d8 points each; 30% chance to catch boulder-sized missiles.

Ogres: 16, AC 5, MV 9, HD 4+1, AT 1, Dmg 1d10 or by weapon, STs14/STw11, THAC0 15, hp 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 23, 26, 27, 27, 29, 30, 33, 34.

Maezera: 1, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8+2, AT 1, Dmg 2d8, STs11/STw8, THAC0 12; hp 53. Throws rocks for 2d8 points each; 30% chance to catch boulder-sized missiles. Magic: 1 *carpet of flying*, 3 persons, MV 30″ (5x7).

Notes on catapults

A catapult of the type used by the ogres can fire 1 rock every 4 rounds and requires a minimum crew of 4 ogres. No benefits are gained for additional crew. A catapult hits as its operator with all targets treated as AC0 (-5 for mobile man-sized targets). Minimum range is 18″; maximum range is 36″. A rock missile inflicts 2d12 points of damage to any creature it hits (4d4 vs. large). Assume that the ogres will hit no creature targets when firing from behind the trees. Missiles will hit walls or buildings at random. Structural damage on buildings for catapult hits and catapult modifiers and damage for rocks hurled by the giants are given in the DMG (p.109-110).

A catapult is considered disabled and non-functional when it has taken 6 defensive points damage.

Order of Events

The ogres start down the trail first, armed with clubs and pushing carts full of boulders to use as ammunition for the catapults, which are stored in a clearing just inside the border of the Ragged Woods. They use the time until Maezera's arrival to bring the catapults into position and load them for the first volley. Sixty boulders are brought down for each assault.

The 12 giants set off one turn after the ogres leave and proceed directly to Bywater, where they hurl rocks into the city for one full turn. Maezera leaves last on her *carpet of flying*. She flies to the clearing to check on the ogres, then walks out to the edge of the Ragged Woods.

When Maezera comes into view, the giants move out of the catapults' line of fire and continue throwing rocks from the sides. At the witch's signal, the ogres open fire. Maezera laughs wickedly, then walks back into the the woods, climbs on her *carpet*, and flies back to her cave, leaving the rest of the force to fend for itself.

The ogres continue firing the catapults until they run out of ammunition, then camoflage the catapults with brush and return to the caves via the East Trail. The giants hurl rocks for a few more rounds, then withdraw into the forest and return to their caves by the same route.

Assume that at the start of the adventure, there are 40 male giants left out of the tribe's original 45. As the siege progresses, the DM may modify the force to reflect the resources available to the giants. If the available attack force is seriously depleted, Maezera will cease attacks until the adventurers either leave the town or seek her out. In no case will Maezera allow the number of male giants to drop below the 11 needed to protect her cave complex and the valley.

Other Notes

Captured giants will talk, but note that their knowledge is somewhat limited. They are under the misconception that Maezera is a witch and believe that she has magical powers. They know that mercenary ogres have been hired as guards, but are unaware that the catapults exist.

If the party cures 75% or more of the damage a captured giant has suffered, he will show them the way to the valley, but will not enter for fear of his life.

The guards listed for Maezera's cavern complex are on duty at all times, whether she herself is there or not. While Maezera is away on an assault, the giant troll will be lounging in her quarters.

ENCOUNTER KEY
Wilderness
The Ragged Woods

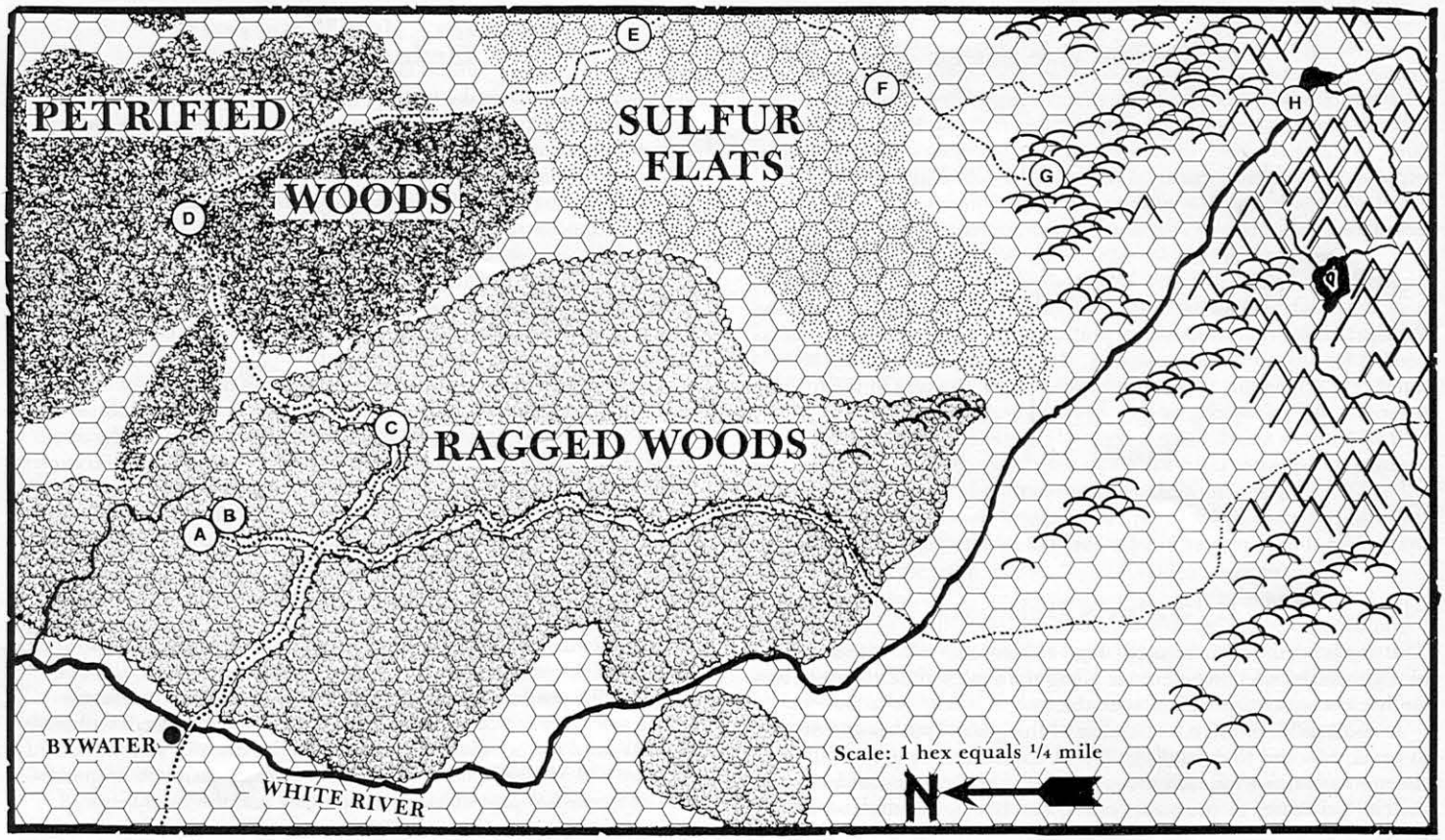
Just inside the Ragged Woods, you see a clearing to the left of the road. At the fringe of the clearing rise stumps of large trees, which look freshly cut. Deep drag marks run from the trail into the clearing, and there are many large footprints in the soft earth.

Rangers and druids can tell that the trees have been cut within the last ten days. The catapults are still here, concealed under the brush.

A. The old chief

There is a clearing ahead on the North Trail. Two large, skeletal feet block the entrance to the clearing. As you come closer, you see that they are attached to a giant skeleton. The bones are broken here and there, and the entire skeleton is charred as though burned by magical fire. The bones have been picked clean by scavengers.

This is all that remains of old hill giant chief. His charred remains



have been left here as a warning to any in the tribe who would disobey Maezera.

B. The tomb

A square building of grey, stained granite surmounted by a bronze dome faces the path. There are no windows, and all is covered with verdigris. A rusted grill locked with a massive padlock covers the double doors, and there is an 8′ tall clay statue on either side of the entrance. Nothing moves.

Clay golems: AC 7, MV 7, HD 11, AT 1, Dmg 3d10, STs10/STw7, THAC0 10; hp 50 each. Golems can *haste* themselves for 3 melee rounds after the first; can only be hit by blunt magic weapons; *move earth* will drive golem back 12″ and inflict 3d12 points of damage; *disintegrate* will slow golem 50% and inflict 1d12 points damage; *earthquake* will stop golem for 1 turn and inflict 5d10 points damage. Immune to all other spells. Damage caused by a clay golem can only be repaired by a *heal* spell from a cleric of 17th level or greater.

There is a *glyph of paralyzation* on the ground immediately in front of the doors. Anyone passing over it without speaking the name of the *glyph* must save vs. spells or be paralyzed for 5d4 rounds. The golems will stand clear of the *glyph* when they position themselves in front of the doors.

The clay golem on the left will animate when anyone comes within 10′ of the entrance, or if attacked. It will step in front of the entrance and block the doors, attacking anyone within range. Once animated, the golem will not move from its position in front of the doors until killed, or until someone says the word for the *glyph* on the ground aloud. The golem on the right will animate when anyone tries to leave the tomb, or if attacked. It will block the exit until the name of the *glyph* is spoken again.

In archaic script, the oxidized bronze doors are inscribed:

Herein rules Garvin Iron-hand,
Protector of Bywater.
Let no man of ill will disturb his rest,
lest he suffer the wrath of Iron-hand.

Inside, dust covers all. Projecting from the back wall is a dais on which lies a cadaverous figure, arms crossed over its chest. There are still a few shreds of clothing and flesh clinging to the frame, and tattered cerements lie about. Clutched to the bony chest is a two-handed sword, which gleams brightly despite the other signs of age and decay. The word "Fersil" is written along its blade in archaic script. There is a locked wooden chest on either side of the dais, and a faded tapestry on the rear wall. Dampness cloaks the tomb, chilling you to the bone.

The body on the dais is Garvin Iron-hand's mummy. It will animate if any of the treasure in the tomb is touched, or if an attempt is made to remove Fersil from its grasp. The mummy attacks only those characters who have taken its treasure. All others will be ignored, although it will defend itself if attacked. If all the treasure is replaced, the mummy will allow the party to leave in peace. The mummy will reanimate 1 turn after being slain or destroyed.

If the characters explain that they need Fersil to save Bywater and promise to return it when they are finished, the mummy will hand the sword to a fighter and return to the dais. Garvin will not allow the group to take anything else from the tomb. If the party fails to return the sword after the adventure, Garvin's mummy will pursue them to take it back.

Mummy: 1, AC 3, MV 6, HD 6+3, AT 1, DM 1-12, STs13/STw10, THAC0 13, hp 33, AL LE.

Notes: Disease per touch, prevents all magical curing until removed. All creatures within 6″ must save vs. spells (humans at +2) or be paralyzed with fear for 1-4 rounds. Can only be hit by magical weapons, which do half normal damage. Immune to poison, paraly-

sis, and *sleep, charm* and cold-based spells. *Raise dead* causes the mummy to save vs. spells or turn into a normal human of 7th level fighting ability. Fire causes damage as follows: torch blow 1-3 points, burning oil 1d8 points per flask the first round and 2d8 the second. Holy water does 2d4 points per vial. Creatures killed by a mummy rot and cannot be raised unless a *cure disease* and a *raise dead* spell are used within 6 turns of death.

Both chests are locked, but not trapped. The chest on the right contains 2000 gp, 700 sp, 8 gems worth 1000 gp each, 1 gold crown set with rubies worth 4000 gp, and a *periapt of health*. The one on the left contains 2 necklaces worth 5000 gp each, *bracers of defense (AC 4)*, 1 jar of *Keoghtom's ointment*, 1 *hammer +2*, 24 *arrows +1, ring of delusion, potions* of *healing* (x2), and *heroism*. Concealed in a compartment under the false bottom is an *axe +3*. The tapestry on the wall is worth 1500 gp.

Fersil is a *+2 Giant Slayer*. It has a +3 bonus "to hit" and damage vs. any giant, ettin, ogre mage, or titan. Against any of the true giants (hill, stone, frost, fire, cloud, storm) the sword does double damage, i.e. 2-24 +3 or 5-27 points.

C. The East Trail

The air is cooler in the woods. A light snow begins to fall. As you follow the old East Trail, far-off howlings sound behind you from the direction of the woods and the tomb. Even as you listen, the howlings repeat, this time seeming much closer than before.

Two hill giants returning from a scouting mission with five worgs have caught the party's back trail and cut through the woods to catch up.

Hill giants: 2, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8+1-2, AT 1, Dmg 2-16, STs11/STw8, THAC0 12; hp 41, 50. Throw rocks for 2d8 points each; 30% chance to catch boulder-sized missiles.

Worgs: 5, AC 6, MV 18, HD 4+4, AT 1, Dmg 2d4, STs14/STw11, THAC0 15; hp 20 each.

The hill giants and worgs move to cut off the party on three sides (north, west, and east). One worg will stand before and one behind the party on the trail. Two giants and three worgs remain on the north side of the trail. The worgs will engage armored characters first while the giants pick off the spellcasters with hurled rocks from the woods. The giants and worgs in the woods have 25% cover, so missile attacks on them are at -2 "to hit".

After the first attacker casualty, each giant rolls percentage dice for morale. Their base morale is 85%; the death of each worg reduces that by 10%. Once a giant has received more than 20 pts of damage, his morale is further reduced 10%. When one fails the morale check, he runs through the woods and across the Sulfur Flats into the lair of the hill giants to warn them of the adventurers.

The first hill giant has a medallion worth 8500 gp, a *ring of fire resistance*, and a *mace +1*. The second hill giant wears a *ring of mammal control* on his left ring finger, which he uses to make the worgs track men. There is a non-magical gold ring on his right ring finger worth 2000 gp. Although the magical *rings* and *mace* look oversized, they neatly fit the hand of any user.

Petrified Woods

Trees stretch naked limbs to the cloudy night sky. Freshly-fallen snow covers all the boughs. A few trees lie on the ground, shrouded in snow. The snow lessens, gradually stopping altogether. The ancient, leafless trees line the path like grim guardians. They do not sway in the breeze.

The trees here are all stone. There is no sign of any life, either animal or vegetable, and there are no recent tracks in the snow.

D. Deadfall

The path lies thinly disguised under newly fallen snow. Between the trunks of the rock-hard trees, a few glimpses of the rising hills layered with snow can be seen. The sky is clear.

One of the fallen stone trees has been raised and suspended in position with ropes. The tripwire at Point D which activates the trap is covered by two inches of freshly-fallen snow. When the trap is activated, the tree falls across the path with a resounding crash. Anyone within 20′ of the tripwire (to either side) when the tree falls must save vs. petrification or take 6d10 points of damage and be trapped under the tree. To free trapped characters, the tree must be raised again with the block and tackle which are visible high in the branches of a neighboring tree.

E. Sulfur Flats

The stench of sulfur fills the air. Patches of snow melt, revealing bubbling sulfur springs to either side of the path you follow. As you watch, bubbles form in the spring and burst, slinging burning mud in all directions.

To the northeast of the Sulfur Flats, the bluffs of the Hills of the Giants rise, impassable. At the top of the nearest hill, a solitary gigantic figure stands silhouetted against the grey night sky, facing your party. After a moment, it turns and walks away from you, down over the crest of the hill and into the valley below.

Any character stepping into the hot sulfur springs takes 1-4 points of heat damage per round of contact from the burning mud.

F. Sink Holes

Around the Sulfur Flats, the snow melts within the half hour. A patch of denuded ground circles each, and the virgin snow lies beyond that.

Two hundred yards into the flats, the ground is pock-marked with circular openings, each about eight feet in circumference. A buzzing sound fills the air, apparently coming from the holes.

The 15′ deep holes have no hand holds, and the edges are smooth and well-worn. Characters spending more than one melee round at the edge of a hole disturb the tiger flies, who will emerge in groups of four every six rounds and attack any visible opponents.

Tiger Flies (male): 8, AC 4, MV 6/18, HD 6, AT 2 and 1, Dmg 1d8/d18 and 4d6, STs14/STw11, THAC0 13; hp 12, 16, 17, 20, 25, 29, 30, 36. May opt to hit with 2 forelimbs for 1d8 each, or "grab" with the other two forelimbs (which do no damage, but hold victim securely until it or the tiger fly is dead). Grabbed victims are stung automatically the next melee round for 4d6 points (no "to hit" roll required), and must save vs. poison or die.

Tiger Flies (female): 8, AC 4, MV 6/18, HD 4, AT 1, Dmg 4d4, STs16/STw13, THAC0 15; hp 7, 11, 15, 19, 23, 28, 30, 31. Must score a "to hit" roll with any 2 of 4 arms to "grab" victim, then stings automatically (no roll required) for 4d4 points on the next round. Victim must save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed (cf. *wand of paralyzation*). Females will lay eggs in dead or paralyzed victims. 13-24 hours later the victim will die when the eggs hatch unless a *heal* spell is applied.

All the shafts connect below ground in a central chamber where the treasure is kept. It consists of 2,000 cp, 5,000 sp, 1000 ep, 2000 gp, 2 gems worth 1000 gp each, 6 gems worth 500 gp each, 3 necklaces worth 500 gp each, *dust of disappearance*, and 3 *arrows of slaying* (1 each for avians, magic-users, and druids).

G. The Patrol

Maezera's mercenary ogre guards patrol the outer perimeter of the hill giants' valley at all hours. If the party's approach has not been noticed, the ogres will be on a routine patrol of the area outside the mouth of the cul-de-sac in 4 groups of 3 ogres each. Place the patrols at evenly-spaced intervals outside the valley, and assume that each patrol will cross its given area once every 2 turns. Om, the leader, will be with one of the central groups. Each ogre is armed with 2 spears and 1 longsword.

Ogre Patrol: AC 5, MV 9, HD 4+1, AT 1, Dmg d10 or by weapon, STs14/STw11, THAC0 15; hp 8, 10, 14, 14, 18, 20, 21, 21, 24, 28, 30, 31.

Leader (Om): 1, AC 3, HD 7, AT 1, Dmg 2d6 or by weapon +2, STs14/STw11, THAC0 13, hp 32. Om uses a *cursed sword -1.*

If any patrol group encounters the party during its watch, one ogre will be sent back to warn the giants, while the others try to hold off the party until reinforcements arrive. The rest of the patrol will close in from the other directions within 2 rounds. Reinforcements will be dispatched 1 round after the lone ogre reports the trouble.

The groups will fan out so that each is as far away from all the others as possible to minimize the possibility of party spellcasters catching more than one group in an area effect. The ogres will pepper the area with spears from several sides, hoping to induce the party to separate and close with individual groups. In melee, Om will preferentially attack a fighter-type in metal armor.

If the adventurers have been sighted by the sentry (Encounter E), or their approach has been reported by an escaped giant from any earlier encounters, the patrol will move to intercept them 200 yards from the mouth of the valley.

Reinforcements: The giants send an orc unit mounted on worgs to aid the ogre patrol if trouble is reported.

Worgs: 12, AC 6, MV 18, HD 4+4, AT 1, Dmg 2d4, STs14/STw11, THAC0 15; hp 8, 9, 12, 15, 15, 18, 23, 27, 30, 32, 36.

Orcs: 12, AC 6, MV 9, HD 1, AT 1, Dmg 1d8 or by weapon, STs17/STw14, THAC0 19; hp 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 6, 6.

As soon as they are among the adventurers, the orcs dismount and begin fighting on foot. When the attackers have taken 50% casualties, they begin to fall back toward the canyon in a fighting withdrawal. If their casualties total 80% or more, they break off combat and flee into the canyon.

If the characters follow the remains of the patrol, go to Encounter G1 and run the ambush. If the party does not pursue, another patrol consisting of 2 giants and 2 worgs will be sent out after 1 hour to search the area for the intruders. The other six giants hold their position until the patrol returns. If the new patrol finds the intruders, it will keep them under surveillence and report the party's position to the valley periodically. If the search turns up no results, the giants will return to their caves.

G1. Caves of the Hill Giants

> The path is little more than an indentation in the new snow leading into a horseshoe-shaped valley. The walls of the hills rise around it, steep and unbreachable. At the back of the valley, amidst the rocks, a thin trail leads to the the mouth of a dark cave at the top of the largest hill. A lone figure is seated on the ledge outside the cave.

There are 45 caves in all, each containing 1 giantess, and from 1-6 young giants. If the giants have been alerted, 8 of the remaining males wait in hiding on the canyon floor, as detailed below. Otherwise, all surviving males not occupied with guard duty or scouting are in their caves with their families. Each cave has 1000 gp in coins, gems, and jewelry concealed somewhere in the single room.

Concealed behind the ridge above Maezera's cave are 8 catapults like the ones used for the siege. There are enough boulders in the area for each catapult to fire 2 volleys. The catapults are kept loaded at all times. If the giants have been alerted, 2 teams of 4 ogres each stand ready to fire 2 catapults per round on Maezera's signal. As before assume that the ogres will hit no creature targets when firing into the valley, although the giants will defend against the flying rocks. Each ogre has 1 spear and 1 longsword within reach in case of attack.

Ogres: 8, AC 5, MV 9, HD 4+1, AT 1, Dmg 1d10 or by weapon, STs14/STw11, THAC0 15; hp 7, 11, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 25.

Maezera and the giant troll have stacked boulders on wooden restraining scaffolding just under the mouth of Maezera's cave. If the giants have been alerted, the troll will be hiding behind rocks on the cliff face, ready to cut the support beams.

If an encounter with the patrol has occurred, the remaining ogres, orcs, and worgs retreat to the rear wall of the canyon, then turn to fight. If the characters follow the patrol into the cul-de-sac, 8 giants move from behind the rocks to block the exit to the canyon, and open fire with their rocks.

Hill giants: 8, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8+1, AT 1, Dmg 2d8, STs11/STw8, THAC0 12; hp 12, 18, 27, 30, 39, 41, 53, 60. Throws rocks for 2d8 points each; 30% chance to catch boulder-sized missiles.

The giants throw rocks until an opponent closes, then pick up clubs made from petrified tree branches and wade into melee, attacking spellcasters first in order to disrupt casting. They attempt to force the adventurers to put the eastern slope of the valley at their backs so that the mouths of the lower caves are behind them.

Maezera steps in front of a mirror fastened just inside her cave entrance so that her image appears on the cliff face outside. Her amulet flashes red as she moves. She signals to the catapult operators, who commence firing 2 catapults per round until their ammunition is exhausted.

The hill giants have a 30% chance of catching the stones. Hill giants who are catching rocks may take no other actions that round.

At Maezera's next signal, the giantesses in the lower caves on the east wall will release 3 giant lizards with shiny metal collars. Hissing evilly, they will attack the nearest character with a +2 (rear attack), if applicable.

Giant lizards: 3, AC 5, MV 15, HD 3+1, AT 1, Dmg 1d8, STs16/STw13; THAC0 16; hp 15 each. Inflicts double damage on a "to hit" roll of 20).

When the giants have taken 50% casualties, they abandon the giant lizards and make a fighting withdrawl back toward the caves, shouting "Help us, Maezera!". Maezera signals the giant troll to start the avalanche. He cuts the supports under the scaffolding, and a low rumbling sound begins. Rocks on the cliff face begin to move, picking up speed as they roll downhill, smashing all in their path.

The avalanche moves at 18″ for 500′ down the cliff face, then decreases speed to 15″ across the valley floor, finally stopping just inside the mouth of the canyon. The ground level caves have been evacuated, and characters close to the canyon walls may be able to duck inside and avoid being crushed. Creatures hit by the avalanche take 1d% points of damage and must save vs. petrification or be pinned beneath it. Pinned characters will suffocate in 2-5 rounds if not rescued.

H. The River

Here is where Maezera's "magic" changed the course of the river. She and her giant troll friend built a dam near the source and redirected the river through the mountains and into some gullies on the far side. The dam can be torn down if desired, returning the river to its original course. It will take 4 man-hours of work to tear down the dam.

Maezera's Cave

If the avalanche has been triggered, the path from the valley floor to the mouth of the cave has been demolished, but the piles of rock

make a handy surface for climbing.

There is a hill giant armed with a club guarding the mouth of Maezera's cave at all times. A pile of boulders for throwing is at hand, and there is a gong that will sound inside the caverns mounted just inside the cave entrance. If the giants have not been alerted, the guard may (40% chance) be asleep. Every 4 hours another hill giant comes from inside the cave to take over.

Hill giant: 1, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8+1, AT 1, Dmg 2d8, STs11/STw8, THAC0 12; hp 38. Throws rocks for 2d8 points each; 30% chance to catch boulder-sized missiles.

The guard can see all of the valley from his perch except the area immediately below the cave. He will sound the alarm inside the caverns as soon as any visible intruders approach, and throw rocks at any opponents in range. He will pick up his club when the party is close enough to melee.

Unless otherwise stated, all passageways in the cavern complex are 15′ wide and 15′ high, hewn out of the natural stone.

1. Company

The tripwire at this spot opens a 10′ × 10′ shifting wall section 20 feet behind it on the east wall. The 6 ogres waiting inside are armed with spears (1d6+3) and longswords (1d8+3), and surprise on 1-4 (on 1d6).

Ogres: 6, AC 5, MV 9, HD 4+1, AT 1, Dmg 1d10 or by weapon, STs14/STw11, THAC0 15; hp 10, 11, 16, 19, 20, 24.

2. The Rainbow Bridge

Ahead is a large, kidney-shaped cavern. A rift at least a hundred feet wide and eighty feet deep cuts through the center. Arching over the rift is a shimmering rainbow bridge, 15′ wide. A set of 4 golden stairs leads up to the bridge, and a similar set is visible at the other end leading to the exit tunnel. Engraved on the golden stairs are the words:

No Need to Tread Lightly On Me,
O Ye Weighty Giants

Two hill giants stand side by side in the center of the bridge, clubs in hand and piles of rocks beside them. 5′ to the west of the bridge, stairs leading down are cut into the rock wall of the rift.

The rainbow bridge is a magical item made especially for the hill giants to ensure the privacy of the chieftain and his family. The bridge radiates a force that pushes outward, preventing creatures with less than a certain weight from stepping on it. It takes a weight of at least 600 lbs. to counter that force and use the bridge. Characters may carry one another across, or strong characters may pick up enough additional weight to make up 600 lbs. (Note that either of these options will make meleeing the two giants difficult.)

Hill giants: 2, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8+1, AT 1, Dmg 2d8, STs11/STw8, THAC0 12; hp 43 each. Throws rocks for 2d8 points each; 30% chance to catch boulder-sized missiles.

The giants will throw rocks at any visible opponents on the ground or in the air while taunting the characters and urging them to come up and fight. Any creature struck in melee on the rainbow bridge takes damage and must save vs. wands or fall 100′ into the rift.

Standing guard inside the depression are 6 of Maezera's mercenary ogres. They are placed to block the exit tunnel in the west wall. She has warned them that invisible intruders may try to slip past, so they have spread flour over the floor of the rift. They will stop and interrogate any suspicious creatures who enter, including giants, since giants would normally use the bridge. As soon as the ogres see any obvious intruders, one of them will leave via the tunnel to warn Maezera.

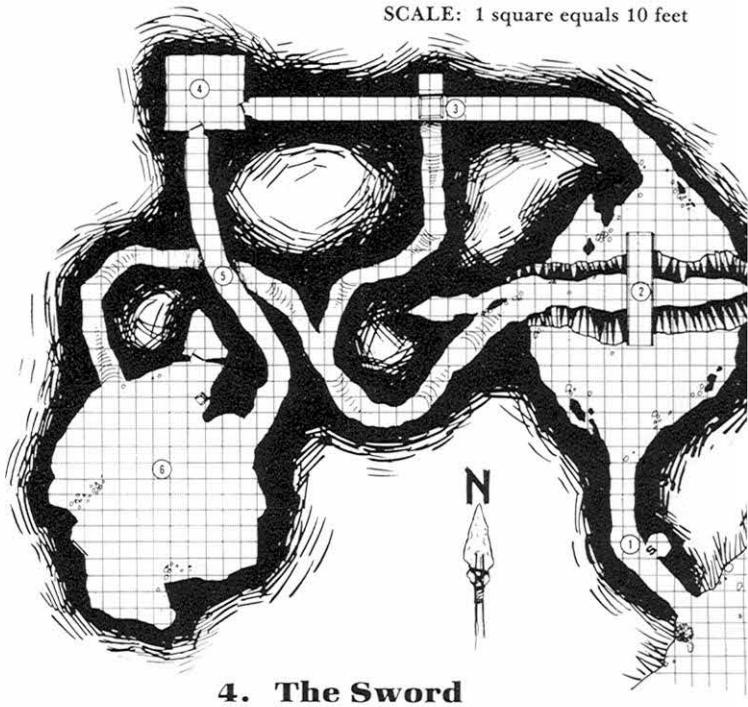
Ogres: 6, AC 5, MV 9, HD 4+1, AT 1, Dmg 1-10 or by weapon, STs14/STw11, THAC0 15, hp 9, 12, 18, 20, 29, 30.

3. Polymorph?

This corridor is built of wood and ankle-deep in dust. At a point 45′ past the entrance to the passage, any weight greater than 50 lbs. will trigger the pit trap on the right side of the corridor, plus a large cloud of dust. A 4-part revolving wall section moves ¼ turn counterclockwise, dropping anyone standing on the 10′ × 10′ section closest to the wall into a pit, and replacing him with the contents of the 10′ × 10′ compartment inside the wall — a large, warty toad. The dust cloud momentarily obscures vision while the switch takes place.

Anyone falling into the pit takes 1d6 of damage from the 10' fall, and finds himself in a narrow tunnel leading south to a T-intersection with the tunnel connecting cavern #2 and cavern #6. The trap will not function a second time unless reset.

SCALE: 1 square equals 10 feet



4. The Sword

This room has obviously been carved out with tools, unlike the natural caverns comprising most of this network. The walls are unfinished, jagged stone, with ridged mineral veins in a variety of hues. The only apparent exit is a wooden door in the south wall. In the center of the west wall, a golden handle protrudes from the rock. Carved into the wall above it is the following inscription:

Men of good faith, those who would help the weak, those who would right a wrong, those who would oppose the lawless, utter the magic word and withdraw the flaming blade

On the walls are 4 tentamorts concealed on the rough stonework. A *detect invisible* spell, infravision, or careful inspection will reveal them; otherwise they will surprise on 1-3 (on 1d6). There is one tentamort to either side of the exit on the south wall, and one to either side of the handle on the west wall. The tentamorts wait until the adventurers approach either the door or the handle, then attack.

Tentamorts: AC 1/3, MV 1, HD 8 (2 per tentacle, 4 for the head and body), AT 2, Dmg 1d6/1d6, STs13/STw10, THAC0 12; hp 11 per tentacle; 25 per body).

Notes: Tentacles immobilize victim on a roll of 2 or more than needed "to hit" or 20 on a d20, whichever is less. Thereafter, the constrictor tentacle does an automatic 1d6 of damage each round until tentacle or victim is dead; the needle tentacle paralyzes victim automatically the following round (no "to hit" roll needed, but save

vs. paralyzation applies). Killing the head and body of the tentamort causes both tentacles to release their victims. It takes 2 rounds for the tentamort to inject a full dose of saliva into a man-sized victim, and another 2 rounds for the victim to die (half those times for creatures smaller than man-sized). *Cure disease* administered within 1 hour can save victim if less than one full dose has been injected; otherwise a *heal* spell or a *regenerate* followed by a *cure wounds* spell is needed within one hour.

The handle in the west wall is actually the hilt of a sword *(+1 flame tongue, +2 vs. regenerating creatures, +3 vs. cold-using, inflammable, or avian creatures, +4 vs. undead)* embedded in the rock. The magic word is *"law"*, which must be spoken aloud while pulling the blade from the wall. The tentamorts have no other treasure.

5. Alarm

The tunnel ahead is 20′ high and pitch dark inside. You can hear the echo of your own footsteps as you approach.

4 doombats are hanging in the tunnel. They will be disturbed by any noise (such as the magnified sound of the party's footsteps), and swoop down shrieking upon the group.

Doombats: 4, AC 4, MV 18, HD 6+3, AT 2, D 1d6/1d4, STs13/STw10, THACO 13, hp 18, 25, 39, 42. Picks up creatures or objects up to 300 lbs weight on a successful hit; shriek prevents spell use and gives opponents a penalty of -1 to all "to hit" rolls within 100′ for 2-5 rounds. Bright light (i.e. *light* spell, but not torch or lantern light) will keep bats at bay.

6. Maezera's Cavern

The cavern is well-lit. At the far end, a huge giantess sits on a golden throne. She wears a gold crown set with sapphires, a ragged scarlet dress, and a pinkish amulet on a chain around her neck. Maezera the Hill Giant Witch grins in an evil fashion, and beckons you forward.

"Welcome gnats. You have come to die. That saves me the trouble of tracking you down and killing you. Do you think that coming here will save Bywater?" She laughs. "As soon as I finish with you, I go there." She snaps her fingers and the stone flashes. "I will destroy Bywater's walls like that. Nothing can stand before the power of my magic. I destroyed the old chief myself. Now that was a fight. You do not look like you can do much to stop me." She laughs again, a laugh tinged with madness. You see the amulet grow red, then purple as her voice grows angrier.

Maezera the Hill Giant Witch: 1, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8+2, AT 1, Dmg 2d8, STw11/STw8, THAC0 12; hp 53. Throws rocks for 2d8 points each; 30% chance to catch boulder-sized missiles.

Although she appears opposite the mouth of the tunnel, Maezera is actually in the alcove to the side of cavern #6. What the adventurers see is an image reflected in a mirror fastened to the back wall. Through a peculiarity of nature, the cavern's acoustics make it seem that her voice is coming from the mirror. Maezera taunts the party, hoping to make the spellcasters use up a perfectly good spell on the reflected image. A *detect invisible* spell will reveal cracks between the mirror and the stone wall.

The mirror will shatter if struck, and must save as glass against any potential damage. Note that a *magic missile* spell will have no effect if cast (breaking up as if by Magic Resistance), as it must be used on a creature. When the mirror shatters, Maezera shrieks, "Kill those meddlers!" and sends the flinds and the giant troll into battle.

Flinds: 5, AC 5, MV 12, HD 2+3, AT 1, Dmg 1d6 or 1d4 with flindbar, STs16/STw13, THAC0 16; hp 6, 9, 11, 13, 15. Attacks at +1 "to hit"; 2 attacks per round with flindbar. If either hits, victim must save vs. wands or be disarmed.

Giant Troll: 1, AC 4, MV 12, HD 8, AT 1, Dmg 2d8, STs13/STw10, THAC0 12; hp 52. Infravision 90′; regenerates as a troll at a rate of 2 points per round; cannot re-bond severed limbs; cannot be killed until at least 10 points of fire damage have been inflicted.

Three of the flinds carry clubs; all have flindbars. Any character disarmed must pull another weapon, or fight the flind bare-handed, as his weapon is flung away from the melee by the action of the flindbar. It takes 1-2 rounds to retrieve a weapon.

The giant troll has been standing near Maezera, and attacks with his immense spiked club at the same time as the flinds. Maezera herself stays back as much as possible, letting the others defend her while she throws rocks from the floor of the cavern at the spellcasters.

Each successful hit Maezera scores in melee means that she has grabbed her opponent and thrown him 10-60 feet away from the battle, inflicting 2d8 points of damage when he lands. This keeps the adventurers from "ganging up" on her. If she manages to throw all her attackers aside, and none can reach her to continue melee, she charges the party spellcasters, intent on meleeing and killing one of them.

When Maezera dies, the stone around her neck goes red, then clear, then finally dull black. Anyone examining the stone immediately recognizes it as a "mood" stone, similar to "mood rings", which are common and non-magical.

The tribe's treasure is kept in the locked alcove where Maezera and her friends, were waiting. The crown on the witch's head is worth 10,000 gp.

6a. Treasury

Stacked around the room are the following: 1 *crystal ball, wands of lightning* (40 chg) and *paralyzation* (35 chg), 1 *rod of resurrection* (12 chg), 1 *wand of paralyzation* (35 charges), 1 *bowl of watery death*, 1 pair of *gauntlets of ogre power*, 1 *shield +3*, 1 *shield -1 (missile attractor), plate mail +2, scale mail +1, 2 longswords +1*, and a *mace +2*.

There is a large treasure chest in the corner, locked and trapped with poison gas (save vs. poison at -2 or die). In it is the entire remaining cash treasury of the giants: 3 necklaces worth 800 gp each, 4 rings worth 500, 500, 600, and 1000 gp, 5 gems worth 1000 gp each, 5 gems worth 500 gp each, and 12,900 gp in cash.

END OF WITCHSTONE

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Kim Lindau
Roger Raupp

FIVE NEW NPCs

Personalities for your campaign

OKHRANA

RACE/SEX: *Gnome male*
ARMOR CLASS: *0*
MOVE: *12″*
HIT POINTS: *60*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (plus magical and strength bonuses)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Magical weapons*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
SIZE: *S (3′ tall)*
FIGHTER: *6th level*
THIEF: *10th level*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 16 I: 10 W: 13
D: 17 C: 14 CH: 9

Okhrana is basically a loner who puts on the false front of being uncaring and cold-hearted, but once he lets his guard down, he comes across as he truly is: a bit naive at times, soft-hearted, shrewd, stubborn, and proud. He is loyal to the party as a whole as long as he is treated with respect and he pulls his fair share of the workload, asking no special favors and granting none.

He distrusts humans (he thinks they're vain boors), likes to pull harmless practical jokes on magic-users and clerics, dislikes half orcs, (he'll play harmful pratical jokes on them if they don't keep their distance), tolerates elves and dwarves (sour-tempered creatures), and gets along well with halflings. His two closest friends are elven maidens, Lunirama and Sabrina.

Okhrana has been known to inadvertently "liven things up" with his impulsive nature, occasionally placing the party in danger as a result.

His bravery is beyond question, however. He wears a plate-mail type of armor fashioned from a landshark he once slew. He fights whomever he must if the situation demands it.

His favorite trick as a thief is to steal a valuable object and insert it into the belongings of a party member (so as to not be caught with it himself), and he retrieves it later. As a rule in public places, he sits with his back to the wall, facing the door, so he can spot people coming in and out first.

He uses a +1 short sword, a +2 *sling of seeking*, and a silver dagger. He is cautious and wary, not brash or foolhardy. His specialty is playing upon the moods of potential opponents.

Created by Michael Amaral

GERRUS GREENSTAFF

RACE/SEX: *Gnome male*
ARMOR CLASS: *-4*
MOVE: *6″*
HIT POINTS: *57*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (plus magical and strength bonuses)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Magical weapons and spells*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Magical protections*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
SIZE: *S (3′6″ tall)*
FIGHTER: *5th level*
ILLUSIONIST: *7th level*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 17 I: 18 W: 9
D: 17 C: 15 CH: 12

Gerrus Greenstaff is a gnome of great skill (and luck); he has been on over 40 adventures and lived to tell about them all. He has never failed on an adventure, and most of the locals consider him the most experienced guide in the region. He doesn't trust strangers, and is very cautious when selecting traveling companions.

Gerrus is very self-conscious about his height, and will attack anyone who teases him about it. He absolutely hates giant-classed humanoids of any type, and if he thinks the odds are right, he'll attack them on sight. Gerrus speaks lizard and elvish, as well as the normal languages allowed gnomes of his alignment.

He owns a set of *bracers of defense* AC2, a small +2 shield, a +1 short sword, a +2 battle axe, a *wand of illusion*, and many potions and scrolls.

In addition to his magic items and equipment, he usually carries 10 gold, silver and platinum coins each, and 3,000 gp worth of gems and jewelry. He also has about 35,000 gp worth of treasure stored in his warren.

Gerrus usually has the following spells memorized: Level 1, *color spray, darkness, detect illusion, read illusionist magic*; Level 2, *hypnotic pattern, improved phantasmal force, mirror image*; Level 3, *dispel illusion, spectral force.*

Created by Ray Morgan

MAROLAR NIGHTSHADE

RACE/SEX: *Half-elf male*
ARMOR CLASS: *4*
MOVE: *9″*
HIT POINTS: *43*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (plus magical and strength bonuses)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Magical weapons and spells*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Magical protections*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *30% to* sleep *and* charm
SIZE: *M (5′5″ tall)*
DRUID: *6th level*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 16 I: 11 W: 18
D: 15 C: 10 CH: 16

Orphaned by the murder of his parents, Marolar Nightshade was raised by the druids of Thornwood, who, like Marolar, are half-elves. After his initial training, he was advised that an ogre tribe who served an evil wizard named George was responsible for the murder of his parents. The evil wizard presently resides in an underground citadel atop Wolf Mountain, and this has been the focus of the young druid's adventuring ever since. Marolar's first forays were little more than a nuisance to George, but lately the wizard has

begun to feel the results of well planned expeditions which are getting deeper and closer to their goal.

When adventuring, Marolar prefers the company of those who identify with nature and druidic beliefs; these include other druids, rangers, monks, and bards. Clerics are taken on adventures only out of necessity, but paladins are usually avoided (they'd want to delay *justice* by giving George a trial).

Magic-users, on the other hand, are barely tolerable to him, due largely to a hatred of George, but also attributable to a chaotic magic-user who once cast a misplaced (and totally unnecessary) *fireball* spell that accidently roasted Marolar's pet giant prairie dog, along with some of George's orcs. Fortunately for this magic-user, he avoided druidic revenge by quickly offering as compensation a gorgeous scimitar (+1, +3 vs. undead).

Thieves are also not trusted by the druid, mainly because in the area around Wolf Mountain thieves are just as prone to steal from party members as from monsters. Marolar will not put up with such nonsense, and always warns party thieves that they will be sorry if they exercise pocket-picking skills on the members of the group. Disbelievers have encountered such unpleasant surprises as small asps nestled in a pouch, a fire-trapped backpack, and a *necklace of missiles* which was really a *necklace of strangulation.* As a general rule, thieves leave Marolar's belongings alone.

Marolar's appearance is unique among adventurers. He is clad in +2 leather armor which is painted and stained in a camoflague pattern; he also carries a wooden shield. Besides the scimitar, the druid carries a spear and sling. On his hip is a specially crafted leather case that carries items for immediate use — scrolls, potions, oil, mirror, herbs, and a small pouch for good berries. Atop his pack is a large bunch of blackberry vines (with roots) for use for an *entangle* spell. Fellow adventurers grumble when they march next to him (due to the thorns), but Marolar shrugs off the criticism because he knows that one day, with luck, George will be hopelessly snarled in the entangling vines with perhaps a few insects *summoned* to keep him company.

Created by anonymous

I received this submission from within the company without an envelope, and there was no name on the copy. If you sent us Marolar Nightshade, please write to us and let us know who you are!

THORN "FINGERS" CAREBDAS

RACE/SEX: *Human male*
ARMOR CLASS: *0*
MOVE: *24"*
HIT POINTS: *53*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (plus magical and strength bonuses)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Magical weapons*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Magical protections*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
SIZE: *M (5'3" tall)*
THIEF: *11th level*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 16 I: 18 W: 11
D: 19 C: 15 CH: 15

Thorn is perhaps the most renowned thief in the history of the Greyhawk regions, and earned the nickname "Fingers" by getting his middle finger on his left hand sliced off by a cautious merchant Thorn had the misfortune of trying to pick-pocket. He has since led many successful and famous adventures and burglaries in this region, usually adventuring alone or with a friend.

He has escaped "misunderstandings" with the law since he was 100 or 200 years old (he never keeps track of his age); he's been caught twice, but escaped later both times, never having spent long in prison.

Thorn prides himself on his accumulation of magic items (some stolen, others found during his adventures), which include: a suit of +1 leather, a *cloak of protection +3*, a *+2 nine lives stealer* (four used), a +1 dagger (+2 vs. small size), *boots of speed,* a *portable hole*, a *ring of 3 wishes* (one used), a *rope of entanglement,* and a *wand of wonder.*

Thorn has always been afraid of magic-users in general, so he does not read magic scrolls as some thieves do. He is theoretically opposed to hurting innocents, refrains from stealing through force or violence, and prefers to use stealth and skill. He has, however, no qualms over spilling the blood of those who directly threaten him or his friends.

"Fingers" is an independent thief, and for this reason, the guilds do not like him. He has never been caught by the local guilds, though they chase him frequently.

Thorn primarily loves adventuring. He always has places to go, items to fetch, and treasures to steal. He now travels the entire world over.

Created by Patrick E. Minton

GAFFER

RACE/SEX: *Halfling male*
ARMOR CLASS: *0*
MOVE: *6"*
HIT POINTS: *62*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (plus strength and magical bonuses)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Magical weapons*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Magical protections*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
SIZE: *S (3'2" tall)*
THIEF: *11th level*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 16 I: 16 W: 10
D: 19 C: 15 CH: 8

Gaffer is a halfling thief who has been adventuring with the same group for some time. He has accumulated a great deal of wealth, and he is basically loyal to his group, although he has pilfered a great deal from those in the group.

He had his dexterity magically raised to 19, and because of this, his skills as a thief are unsurpassed. Few traps exist that Gaffer has not disarmed. He has long intended to make some traps of his own, but he just hasn't found the time yet.

In his youth, Gaffer was imprisoned for picking pockets several times, so he put more effort into practicing, honing his skills in that area so that he is now an expert.

His one fear is of undead (he had some nasty encounters with vampires and a ghost once). He has also learned not to steal from royalty, as his *ring of invisibility* and *amulet of protection from detection and location* were the only things that once saved him from a vengeful king.

Gaffer also owns *gauntlets of dexterity, bracers of defense* (AC4), a *portable hole,* a *dagger of venom*, a +3 short sword, and a *periapt of proof against poision.*

At present, Gaffer is wrestling with the idea of starting a guild of his own and settling down. In his mind, picking pockets provides a sure and easy income, but it lacks the excitement of adventuring.

Created by Dan Schulz

Module Building from A to Z

Creating adventures for your campaigns (and for publication)

by Roger ("Module Hunt") Moore

One of the things I do during my work hours is keep tabs on the "Module Hunt" that DRAGON® Magazine is running. Despite being horrifyingly behind schedule due to delays beyond our control, the Module Hunt is still progressing, and people are sending in their ideas for modules they would like to write up for the magazine. (See DRAGON Magazine #85, p. 54, for more information.)

Having looked at hundreds of module queries and read through dozens of modules, good and bad, I began developing a set of module guidelines to detail what we wanted to see and what we didn't want to see. It occurred to me that the readers of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine might like to get an advance look at the guidelines, although they are still in rough form at the moment.

Comments and questions on these guidelines would be most welcome. Hopefully, the final version will be the most complete set of module submission guidelines ever developed. These guidelines apply to submissions made to DRAGON Magazine and POLYHEDRON Newszine. Remember to always send a query letter before you send a module, and describe your module in detail to give the editors a chance to say "yea" or "nay" before you start working.

The first section of guidelines given below apply to all module submissions. Following these will be specific suggestions for the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and TOP SECRET® games. Details on other game systems are being worked out and may be included in future articles if we get enough requests for them.

Although these notes describe submissions standards for our magazines, some of these comments are applicable to adventures that you may be developing for your gaming group. It pays to avoid the serious pitfalls.

Preliminary notes

The age, sex, race, nationality, ethnic group, and religion of a person submitting a module to us makes no difference in our evaluation of the module. If you are concerned that such information would influence our judgement, then don't send us this information. Our judgement of a module rests upon the quality of the module idea or module itself. If you express yourself well, have good ideas, and can type well (or know someone who can), that's all we care about.

Permissible games

The following game systems are acceptable for module submissions:

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGON® game;
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game (Basic, Expert, and Companion levels);
TOP SECRET® game;
STAR FRONTIERS® game;
GAMMA WORLD® game;
MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game.

We cannot accept modules based on games made by other companies, as it is too difficult to know the rules for *every* game on the market to ensure module quality. After careful consideration, we are also not accepting modules based on the following TSR games, due to low reader interest: DRAGONQUEST™ game; GANGBUSTERS™ game; BOOT HILL® game; UNIVERSE™ game. However, we are willing to look at regular article submissions on most of the above games. DRAGON® Magazine is also willing to look at regular article submissions on games not produced by TSR, Inc., such as the TRAVELLER® game by Game Designers' Workshop, CHAMPIONS™ game by Hero Games, STAR TREK®: The Role-Playing Game by FASA Corporation, the CALL OF CTHULHU™ game by Chaosium Inc., or the CHILL™ game by Pacesetter, Ltd.

Physical quality of manuscript

Always enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with your module submission, and make sure that the envelope is large enough to hold your entire module in case we need to return it to you. If you do not wish your module returned (for example, if you have it photocopied or recorded on computer disk), then enclose a regular-sized SASE for us to correspond with you about your manuscript.

Consistently poor spelling, grammar, and sentence structure will almost certainly cause a module to be rejected. Even if you feel that your module idea is strong and that you have a good grasp of English grammar, you should have the module proofread by at least one other person, preferably an English teacher or professor. This is directly to your advantage as we will pay more money for modules which require little editing.

Manuscripts should be typed (by typewriter or word-processing computer) on clean white paper; lines should be double-spaced to allow editing. We will not accept handwritten modules in pencil or pen; and again, any sort of calligraphy script or Gothic lettering is completely unacceptable. Also, do not type the manuscript in all capitals; we will reject it immediately.

Make sure that your typewriter keys are clean and that they do not punch holes in your paper. If the letters are filled in and hard to read, or if the "o"s are punched through the pages, then fix the typewriter or find another one.

The printed type should be dark enough to be read easily; you are advised to change your typewriter or computer ribbon before printing out the final copy of your module and sending it to us.

We will also reject a computer-printed manuscript in which the pages are so badly centered that sentences are written over the tear-lines between pages. If you care about your module or article, make it look presentable.

If you send a photocopy of your module to us, make sure it is on letter-quality paper. Slick, excessively gray, or streaked photocopy paper is unacceptable.

Artwork and maps

A finished module should be accompanied by all relevant maps and diagrams needed to complete the adventure. Additional

drawings, sketches, and charts may be added to clarify various points in the adventure. Note that it is highly likely that we will have the necessary maps, diagrams, etc., redrawn by a staff artist for the final printed module.

Make sure that any artwork sent with the module is neatly done in ink; pencil sketches are generally not acceptable.

Maps should be done in ink, should be easily and clearly legible, and should have the scale clearly marked. Indecipherable maps will cause immediate module rejection; pencil-drawn maps are also out.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game modules

Module settings and content

AD&D® game modules should not be tied to any one specific game world, but should be easily adaptable to most Dungeon Masters' game campaigns. Module designers should avoid locating their adventures in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Fantasy Setting, and avoid using particular personalities, countries, artifacts, politics, and so forth that relate directly to that game universe (e.g., Codex of the Infinite Planes, Mordenkainen, St. Cuthbert, etc.). We wish to leave the development of this universe to E. Gary Gygax and his associates.

Similarly, we ask that you not set your adventures in the world of Krynn (the setting for the DRAGONLANCE™ adventure series), as this game universe is under development by a special team of TSR game designers, authors, and editors.

Avoid using any material from copyrighted sources without permission. Anne McCaffery's DRAGONRIDERS OF PERN™ books, Piers Anthony's Xanth series, Michael Moorcock's Elric series, J.R.R. Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS series, Larry Niven's Kzinti, and the Cthulhu mythos created by H.P. Lovecraft, et. al., are good examples of material that cannot be used in your module submission. Develop your own materials and backgrounds; we pay highly for originality and creativity.

Module design tips

It is virtually an axiom of module design that in order to write a module, one must study modules — lots and lots of modules. You are strongly urged to find copies of game modules that have been published in DRAGON® Magazine (regular TSR modules are different in design), and you should study them closely for content, presentation, and overall design. Which materials were included and which were not? How are the maps designed? Don't read just one module, either; study several of them, discuss them with your co-designers or friends, and learn from them.

World-threatening, save-the-planet situations should generally be avoided as destructive to campaign balance in any game. Even "high-level" adventures should have the balance of the game kept in perspective, challenging players without damaging the referee's world set-up. For this reason, "god-killing" adventures should also be avoided.

Tastelessness should be strictly avoided. Do not write adventures involving the destruction of children and helpless persons; the "It's Alive!" theme; excessive gore, torture, or violence; descriptions of Satan or Satanism; game versions of major Christian, Jewish, or Moslem religious figures; and so forth. Explicit sex, the encouragement of drug abuse, offensive language, and bathroom humor cannot be used. Our periodicals have a huge readership, and we've got a corresponding responsibility to keep our material exciting but clean.

Do not use non-player characters (NPCs) to help the players excessively. NPCs who step in and eliminate all opposition to the player characters, accomplish their goals for them, and generally do everything the players want or need from the adventure are deadly dangerous to modules. Boredom will set in at once. Design the adventure to challenge a party, and let the group make it or break it on its own. Avoid using the *deus ex machina*.

Conversely, do not set up NPCs in an adventure that will totally overwhelm a party. Baba Yaga, as described in the "Dancing Hut" module of DRAGON® Magazine issue #83, was an exceedingly powerful character. However, the module was intended for AD&D® game characters of 9th level and greater. Such characters have a chance to avoid being killed by her from their own assumedly considerable powers.

Use Baba Yaga, the quasi-deities of Greyhawk (issue #71), the major heroes of the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopedia (now renamed as Legends & Lore), and the saints from DRAGON Magazine issue #79 as rules of thumb for the maximum limit on NPC powers. If you wish to use such characters, there must be a good reason for them to be in the adventure.

Encounters should be described fully whenever possible. If your module is exceptionally long or if we need space, some specific details on monsters may be dropped (as was done with the "Dancing Hut" module mentioned above). In AD&D game modules, the NPCs and monsters encountered should follow the following format: Type and number of monsters (armor class, movement rate, hit dice, hit points, damage/attack, other special data).

For example: 4 giant warrior ants (AC 3; MV 18″; HD 3; 15, 17, 17, 20 hp; D/Att 2-8 + poison sting for 3-12, or 1-4 if save vs. poison is made).

Treasure, encounters, monsters, NPCs, details on the environment, and special information required on spellcasting, combat, altering the environment, or accomplishing the mission should be detailed sufficiently to allow the referee to run through the scenario without undue trouble.

Illogical dungeons/set-ups where monsters are randomly thrown together should be avoided. This does not mean one cannot use random encounter tables, but the tables should be logical and consistent with the adventuring environment. Forest encounters should include elves if an elven band lives nearby, for example. Also avoid wildly inconsistent mixing of monsters (tribes of orcs and elves living together, a 1st-level dungeon with a lich in it, etc.). Your adventure should be sensible and "believable."

Dungeon or indoor complexes laid out in perfect symmetry are boring. Use your creativity, even if the final result isn't perfect architecture. Imagine what settings would be most interesting and exciting for adventurers, and go with them. Excessively large maze areas in dungeons or indoor areas are also boring and dull; unless something is done to "enliven" them, avoid using them.

Situations in your module which would appear to violate established AD&D game rules should be altered or justified. Normal dwarves in the game do not use magic, but the dwarves of Norse mythology do (see the "Aesirhamar" module, issue #90 of DRAGON Magazine); justifiable variations are permissible. Some rules violations — having evil druids, good assassins, *charm* spells that change a victim's alignment, and so forth — are simply not acceptable.

Avoid ridiculous situations. Granted, you may be writing a fantasy module, but if it looks silly to you to have 100 kobolds in a 10′ x 10′ room, it will look silly to everyone. Logical, consistent, and well-developed adventures are highly desired. Nobody should be able to summon an

army of 20,000 demons in an adventure — not even the bad guys.

Don't over-reward players or under-challenge them. We will reject modules in which mighty treasures are guarded by wimpy monsters, or in which characters can walk off with blocks of diamonds the size of cars. Take the time to make the treasures in fantasy modules more than a collection of gold pieces; read the tips in the *DMG*, pgs. 91-92, concerning the placement of monetary and magical treasures, and use your imagination.

Avoid mass-combat situations where armies clash against armies. As of yet we have no mass-combat rules for most of our role-playing games. If you have developed such a system, by all means, send it to us!

Remember, after all, that there is no deadline for the Module Hunt. The Module Hunt is an ongoing search for good modules for our magazines, not a contest. Take your time and do a good job the first time; don't rush things and ruin them. Work carefully and do your best.

We have few "hard and fast" rules about how a module should be put together for DRAGON® Magazine or POLYHEDRON™ Newszine. We're willing to take a look at any innovative ideas which involve changes in a module's structure, setting, the nature of the adventure, and so forth. Such innovations should not, however, interfere with understanding and using the module, and should enhance the module's playability and enjoyability.

Below is a list of recently published AD&D game modules from DRAGON Magazine. You may find it helpful to read and study these modules before writing yours, particularly if your module is similar in some respect to one of them: "Fedifensor" (issue #67); "Mechica" (issue #70); "Forest of Doom" (issue #73); "Can Seapoint Be Saved?" (issue #75); "Citadel By The Sea" (issue #78); "Barnacus: City in Peril" (issue #80); "The Ruins of Andril" (issue #81); "The Dancing Hut" (issue #83); "The Twofold Talisman" (issues #84 and 85); "Aesirhamar" (issue #90).

Ideas to explore

We've only done one solo module ("Cavern Quest," AD&D game, DRAGON Magazine issue #54), and we wouldn't mind looking at others. Many of our readers are isolated or have trouble finding other gamers, and something that would allow solo play or play without a referee for several players would be of interest to us.

Low-level AD&D game modules, for characters of levels 1-4, would be well regarded. We get few submissions along these lines, and we need creative, interesting modules for these characters that are exciting and challenging.

We are still interested in AD&D game adventures occuring on other planes (Elemental Plane of Fire, Arcadia, etc.). Such modules should include all necessary information on running general adventures in the given environment, possibly submitted as a separate article (as was done with the Astral Plane in issue #67 of DRAGON Magazine, and the planes of Gladsheim in issue #90). However, some planes have already been "claimed" and are being worked upon by other authors. Send a query letter before attempting to do anything with an outer plane.

Unusual environments should be explored. The depths of the jungle, strange magical forests, arctic environments, other Prime Material worlds, deserts, mountaintops, and aerial fortresses — all beg for adventures. Modules that carefully detail unusual fantasy cities (underground dwarven enclaves, elven forest towns, etc.) would also be appreciated, though human cities such as Barnacus from DRAGON Magazine issue #80 are also acceptable if they are unusual in some respect. We seem to have had a lot of seaports submitted to us, but few inland cities, river towns, etc.

Ideas to avoid

We strongly recommend that you avoid stereotyped, hackneyed, cliche-ridden material. The following concepts and ideas have generally worn out their welcome with all gamers:

Rescue the kidnapped daughter of the king, the town mayor, or the village woodcutter;

Rescue Santa Claus or anyone who even looks like him;

Fight against ninjas (We don't yet have a ninja subclass that we feel makes an acceptable NPC; if you MUST do a ninja-related module, detail the NPC class as a separate article and include it with your adventure. Ninjas cannot *be player characters.)*

Meeting any real-life personality (Alexander the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Alister Crowley, etc.).

Also avoid game hybrids and crossed campaigns; don't have your AD&D game characters find a way into GAMMA WORLD® game settings or into the STAR FRONTIERS® or TOP SECRET® game universe. This can lead to untold numbers of problems in campaign balancing. Also avoid having game characters enter the "modern world" to raid shopping malls, break into jewelry stores and gun shops, etc. Characters from the AD&D game may enter other magical universes with different physical laws, but these worlds should be independent of other game systems.

TOP SECRET® Game Modules

Those who want to design modules for the TOP SECRET game should read the guidelines given above for the AD&D® game, paying attention to those parts which could apply to all game systems (such as the remarks about module "tastelessness"). Some of the guidelines below repeat the statements made for the AD&D game. Putting them into the terms of the TOP SECRET game, however, often clarifies the point to those doing material for that game.

Again, though we cannot do modules on non-TSR games, DRAGON Magazine is willing to look at article material on other games such as the JAMES BOND 007™ Role-Playing Game by Victory Games, the MERCENARIES, SPIES & PRIVATE EYES™ Game by Flying Buffalo, the BEHIND ENEMY LINES™ game by FASA Corp., or the TIMEMASTER™ game by Pacesetter, Ltd.

Module settings and content

TOP SECRET game adventures, by their nature, should all take place on Earth in the current time period. We are not accepting adventures set in World War II (though the idea IS interesting) or in other times past. We are also not interested in modules that attempt to recreate historical events, such as the capture of Gary Powers by the USSR, the Bay of Pigs invasion, attacks on or by the SLA, etc.

It is possible to postulate that certain things exist in the TOP SECRET world that may exist in the very near future. A small space station may be in Earth orbit, laser surgery and laser weapons may be somewhat more common that they are now, and so forth. A rule of thumb would be to allow scientific developments that could appear within the next 5-10 years in TOP SECRET game modules.

The TOP SECRET game world is assumed to be very much like the one we live in now, but subtlely different. Some differences may be noticed by reading the various modules concerning the TOP SECRET game that have been published by TSR, Inc. None of these alterations are critical; most involve the existence of

various persons or organizations that do not exist in real life (such as the Children of Neptune, from the "Whiteout" module in DRAGON® Magazine, issue #87). Feel free to create your own new organizations or to build upon those previously established.

Avoid using any material from copyrighted sources without permission. Various spy novels by Len Deighton, John LeCarre, Ian Fleming, Robert Ludlum, Alistair MacLean, and others may not be directly adapted into TOP SECRET modules. Note that Ian Fleming's James Bond novels are licensed for gaming use by Victory Games, Inc., and James Bond (as well as his numerous allies and enemies) cannot be used in particular.

Module design tips

World-threatening, save-the-planet situations should generally be avoided as destructive to campaign balance in any game. The game balance must be kept in perspective, and the adventure should challenge the players without damaging the referee's world set-up. Scenarios which involve the threat of immediate nuclear holocaust, major land and sea battles, and huge invasions of aliens from space should not be used.

Because TOP SECRET gaming takes place in the modern world, it is also wise to avoid using material that could be offensive to particular ethnic groups. We cannot lay down specific guidelines for avoiding this problem, and feel it best to take up the matter on a case-by-case basis. Keep this in mind, however.

Do not use NPCs in an adventure who will totally overwhelm a party. One would imagine that an enemy agent on the level of James Bond or Derek Flint would be a terrible opponent, so he should not be sent against lower-level agents. He can be reserved for high-level agents to encounter. If you wish to use such characters, there must be a good reason for them to be in the adventure.

Encounters should be fully described. If your module is exceptionally long or if we need to trim it for space, some specific details may be dropped. It is best to draw up a ready-reference chart listing the NPCs encountered and their personal game statistics, rather than list the statistics where the NPC first appears in the module. The weapons and equipment carried by an NPC, along with relevant personality and reaction notes, may be included with the first mention of the character, if appropriate.

All encounters, NPCs, hazards, rewards, details on the environment, and special information required for combat, altering the environment, or accomplishing the mission should be given to allow the referee and players to run through the scenario without trouble.

Illogical adventuring set-ups where agents and hazards are randomly thrown together should be avoided. This does not mean one cannot use random encounter tables, but the tables should be logical and consistent with the adventuring environment. U.S. Army personnel will be met on a more-or-less random basis on the grounds of Ft. Knox, for example, but you aren't likely to meet hordes of gangsters, Chinese secret agents, and SWAT teams there (unless you have a *very* unusual module). Also avoid wildly inconsistent mixing of NPC encounters (like Russian, Chinese, and Albanian secret agents all working together). Your adventure should be sensible and believable.

Situations in your module which violate established TOP SECRET® game rules should be altered or justified. If you alter the effectiveness of an agent's disguise, weapon, explosives, or hand-to-hand attacks, make sure you explain why this is happening. Some rules violations are simply not acceptable in modules, such as the addition of a new means of figuring Life Levels or variant hit location charts. Stay within the established rules.

One may add new material to a module that expands upon the old rules. The "Whiteout" adventure in DRAGON® Magazine #87 included rules for arctic/antarctic adventuring. You could include rules for jungle combat, undersea adventuring, and so forth if such are relevant to your adventure.

Avoid ridiculous situations. If it looks silly to you to have 100 nuclear missiles hidden in Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, it will look silly to everyone. Nobody should build giant undersea cities in Los Angeles harbor or steal nuclear submarines as if they were candy.

Do not give PCs incredibly powerful items such as howitzers, miniature atomic weapons, or 10,000-gigawatt laser pistols. Most adventures work best with few items of a powerful nature; at most, a few portable LAW weapons or a flamethrower should prove sufficient (depending on the nature of the opposition).

Below are two recently published TOP SECRET® modules from DRAGON® Magazine, with comments on interesting and important aspects of each. You may find it helpful to read and study these modules before writing yours

"Wacko World" (DRAGON issue #79) — Adventure for 4-8 agents of the Investigation Bureau. Agents must check out an amusement park for evidence linking it to an extortion racket with broad criminal powers. During the investigation, agents encounter important NPCs and may stumble upon a terrorist assassination plot. Notes on two new skills, disguises, crowd density, and tapping phone lines are provided, along with a timetable of events for the adventure.

"Whiteout" (DRAGON issue #87) — Adventure for 8 agents from all bureaus. Agents investigate an independent research station in Antarctica following some unusual happenings. During the investigation, agents may discover a terrorist plot involving the survivalists who inhabit the station. Rules on cold weather conditions, antarctic travel, daytime and nighttime encounters, and code names are given.

Some ideas to explore

We've never done a solo module for TOP SECRET gaming before, but we'd be interested in looking at one. Again, many of our readers are isolated or have trouble finding other gamers, and something that would allow solo play or play without a referee for several players would be of interest.

Unusual environments should be explored. The "Whiteout" module in DRAGON Magazine #87 investigated Antarctica. What about the steaming jungles of Thailand, the outback of Australia, the inner cities of the American east coast? Adventures aboard submarines, supersonic jet liners, and anywhere else that a secret agent might face death for high stakes should be considered.

Some ideas to avoid

Again, we strongly recommend that you avoid stereotyped material. Do *not* have your agents rescue the beautiful daughter of a mad scientist; fight terrorists who have kidnapped the President; search for stolen nuclear weapons; raid small islands where large amounts of drugs are kept; serve as bodyguards to rock groups; meet any real-life personality (President Reagan, the Soviet Premier, Patty Hearst, the Ayatolla Khomeni, etc.), or get involved in plots against the Olympics. We've seen dozens of plots involving the above, and we don't want to see any more of them. Surprise us, and we may surprise you.

Also avoid game hybrids and crossed game systems. This can lead to horrible problems in campaign balancing.

The RPGA™ Network Tournament Scoring System

In 1983, the RPGA Network adopted a new scoring system for use with its tournaments at conventions. It was a generic point system for team advancement designed to be adaptable to the preferences of the individual tournament coordinator. But after it had been in use for a while, it became clear that the system didn't work as well in practice as it did on paper. It was cumbersome and not easily comprehensible, often requiring judges to spend unreasonable amounts of time debriefing in order to ensure fair team ratings. Thus, we have officially returned to the original RPGA Tournament Scoring System for all of our sponsored events. Originally developed by Frank Mentzer, the voting system is unique to the RPGA Network. It is, more than any other, YOUR system, because YOU decide the winners.

Although countless variations exist, there are two basic types of tournament scoring systems. Large multi-round events usually use team advancement systems; small 1-round events tend to use individual scoring. Each takes a different approach, and either can be suitable depending on what you want from your event.

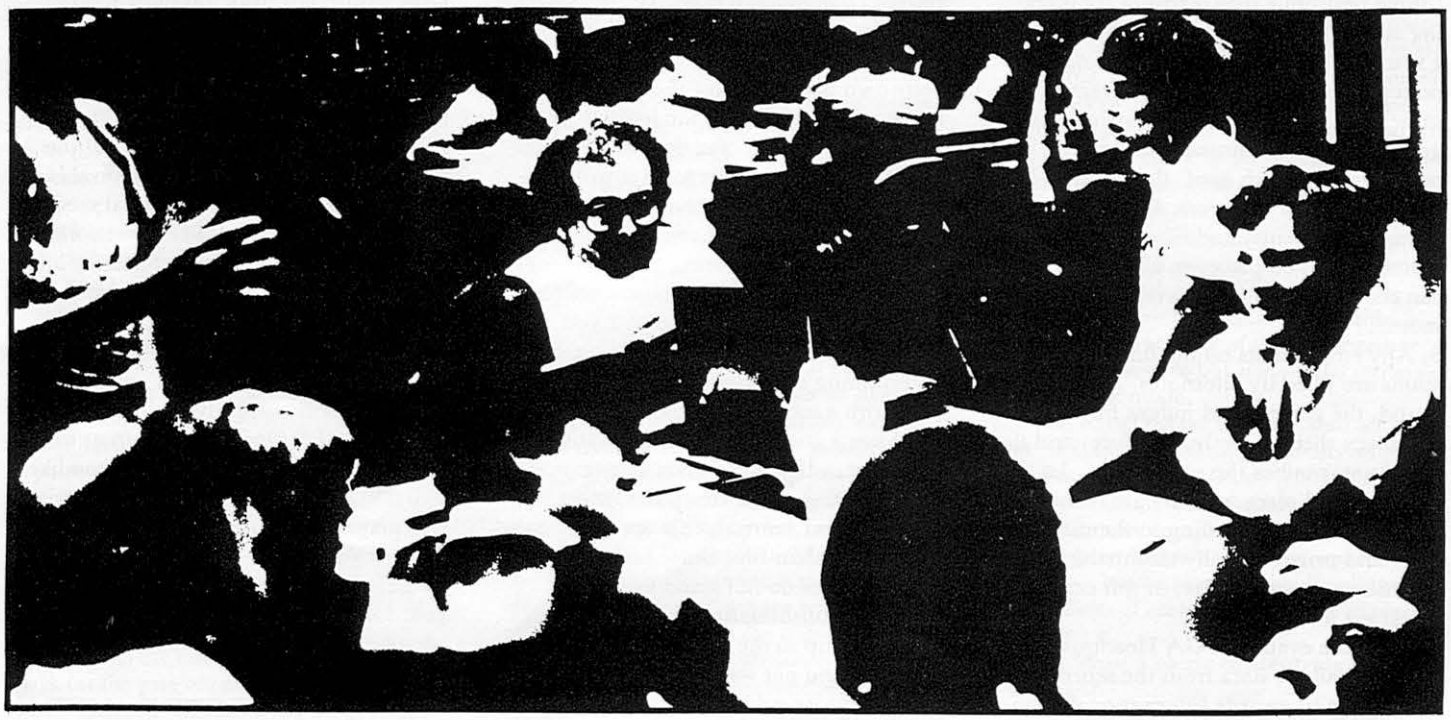
In the first type of tournament, whole teams compete against one another. But no one person can watch all the teams all the time to judge which was best, so each team's performance is compared with the others through certain measurable quantities. The exact basis for scoring varies, but most team advancement tournaments use one or more of the following criterion:

1. Attainment of goals. Did your party achieve the goal? If not, how close did you come? If so, how long did it take you to do it?
2. Number of survivors. How many characters survived the mission? What percentage of their original hit points did they have left at the end?
3. Specific actions peculiar to the tournament. Did your team solve the problem in Encounter "X" by the most elegant method?
4. Tiebreakers. Role playing cannot be measured by an absolute scale, so it it is sometimes used as one of the tiebreakers if two teams are tied for points. The highest-ranked teams are promoted to the next round and play continues.

In an individual advancement tournament, players within the same team are competing against each other. The basis for scoring can be objective (as above), or it can be the judge's opinion of player quality, or it can be a little of both.

The RPGA Network took the individual advancement idea one step further and applied it to large multi-round events. The few best players from each team are promoted to the next round where they are reassembled into teams and play continues. Players or teams do *not* accumulate points for right and wrong actions as they do in an "objective" system. But who goes on is not just the judge's decision. Each team has been watched throughout the entire round by several qualified observers — the team itself — and each member of the team gets to participate in the decision. The judge's opinion carries more weight than that of any one player but not as much as the whole team.

Let's take an example and work it through the system. Suppose we have a two round tournament with six player teams in both rounds, and we want to promote the best 50% of the players from



round 1 into round 2.

1. Players are assigned to teams randomly for the first round, and each team is assigned a number, a judge, and a room. Each DM and player fills out a 3″ x 5″ index card with the following information: name, team number, and character name (player only).
2. At the end of round 1, all players and DMs fill out summary sheets on which they list, in order, their votes for the best four players in their group (best player first), based on role-playing skill, rules knowledge, and cooperation, both with other players and with the judge. Specific traits of the character (leadership, stubbornness, etc.), are not considered. Players may explain their characters' actions and motivations before the voting, but after the round ends, if desired.
3. Each judge turns in the Player Summaries, DM Summary, and all the index cards to the Tournament Coordinator, who adds up the votes. A vote for first place is treated as 4 points, second place as 3 points, third place as 2 points, and fourth place as 1 point. The judge's votes count as 8, 6, 4, and 2 points, respectively. After the votes are converted to numbers, they are placed on a grid sheet and totalled. Each player's total is written on the index card, along with his ranking on the team (#1-#6).
4. The cards for the top three players on each team are placed in one pile, and the 4th place cards are put aside as alternates. Others (if any) are kept for records. The Coordinator arranges the cards from the "three best" pile into teams of six, making sure that no two players from a round 1 team are together in round 2, and that no team has more than two players of the same rank. The coordinator assigns each group a new team number and judge, notes them on each card, then posts a list of all the round 2 players, team numbers, room assignments, and meeting times in a predetermined place, so all the players can check to see if they have been promoted.
5. Any empty seats on the final round teams are filled by alternates. After the round, the players and judges fill out their summary sheets exactly as before, and the coordinator tallies the votes again. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners are chosen from each team according to the rankings, and prizes (usually membership extensions, merchandise, or gift certificates) are awarded.
6. After the event, RPGA Headquarters processes all the data from the scoring materials and awards International Scoring Points to all who participated. (See the upcoming "Scoring Points" article for details on how that system works.)

The scoring method can have more of an effect on the tournament than you might think. The way the participants (both players and judges) approach the event depends on how the winners are decided. Scoring even determines how the scenario must be written.

Let's take the typical team advancement tournament as an example. Teams win by achieving the goal faster than all the other teams and with fewer casualties, so the players come prepared to hurry through the encounters as quickly as possible. Some don't even wait for the judge to finish reading the area description before organizing their actions! Taking the time to properly role play the characters could allow some other team to finish the scenario before you do. And the better you do, the less playing time you get, because finishing early is desirable! Such events aren't christened "D&D® game races" for nothing. A win means a team was organized and alert, but does it mean the team members were good role players? Of course not! In fact, if players happen to get a couple of poor players on their team, they're stuck with them for the duration of the event. Since teams progress as a unit, bad players can be carried along to a win with a good team, and good players can be prevented from advancing if the others on their team make mistakes.

We in the RPGA Network know that the name of the game is role playing. We recognize individual expertise in a system that is more like the way you play at home. You are free to play the roles at your own pace, without the pressure of reaching a goal during the limited tournament time allotted. You needn't worry about how fast another team is progressing, because no matter how far you get, the same number of players will progress from *your* team as from a team that finished the scenario. Poor players are weeded out early, so by round 2 you almost certainly have competent and entertaining companions to play with. And with a more relaxed atmosphere, you can have a good time for the duration of the event, whether you win or not!

From the judge's viewpoint, team advancement tournaments are sometimes more work than fun. Since teams with slower judges do not stand as good a chance of finishing first (even if they play well), it is up to the judge to keep up the fast pace and not waste the players' time. An inaccurate ruling can also hurt the team's chances, because it may alter the situation so that it is not the same as that faced by others. All this pressure plus the sometimes lengthy debriefing session (to make sure each team has been scored fairly with respect to all the others) could ruin anyone's day!

The voting system takes the pressure off the judges and allows them to have some fun too. They are free to role play and run the event with their own personal style since the speed or quality of the judge does not affect the scoring. Judges are rated by the players after the event so that the best ones can be called on again and improve the quality of play in the future.

Some scoring systems cannot be used with just *any* scenario. To use an objective system, the adventure must be written "tournament style." The idea is that each group must face exactly the same situation so that the performances of all the teams can be compared. Therefore, the adventure is often linear with no choice of direction, and often with only a limited choice of allowable actions. Encounters are defined right down to the number of surprise segments the monsters or party get. Some scenarios can be converted to tournaments if they are already nearly linear "gauntlet runs," but others are completely unsuitable for this method. So whether the coordinator decides to write a scenario from scratch or convert an existing one, a lot of preparation time goes into getting one ready.

The voting system is far more flexible, however. It doesn't matter if one team faces a different situation than another because teams aren't being compared. So RPGA HQ can take any well-written scenario (linear or not), tailor it to the time restrictions, and use it for a tournament immediately. In fact, most of the RPGA Network tournaments run this year were upcoming commercial modules from TSR, Inc. The RPGA Network was able to provide several tournaments and you as members got to play the new modules before anyone else did!

Each system has its benefits and its drawbacks. If you like team advancement, goal-oriented adventures, try one of the AD&D® Open events run at most major conventions each year. If you like individual advancement with emphasis on role playing, try one of the several dozen RPGA Network tournaments scheduled for next year. There should be one near you. Or perhaps you like both . . . but whatever kind of tournament you play,

Happy gaming!

DISPEL CONFUSION

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Fantasy Adventure Game

ADQ: Can multiple *shocking grasp* spells be stored in the body? Could a magic-user cast 5 or 10 of them, then discharge all of them at once?
ADA: *Any* spell "on hands" remains there until something or someone is touched (and is then discharged, regardless of the result) or until another spell is cast.

ADQ: Can a *glyph of warding* be put on a weapon's handle so anyone touching the handle would take damage?
ADA: Yes. But note that the *glyph* must be placed upon a surface area, not a volume, and that the surface must be solid (as incense is used to trace the area to be warded).

ADQ: How experienced must a cleric be to cast a *glyph of warding* for paralysis or energy drain?
ADA: *Glyphs* for these and other effects may be cast by clerics who can also cast spells with similar effects. Thus, for a *glyph of energy draining*, the cleric must be 16th or higher level. Treat paralysis as if a *hold person* effect, thus castable by anyone who can cast a *glyph* in the first place.

ADQ: Could a character manufacture a *wand of permanency*?
ADA: No. As a rule of thumb, any spell effect of 5th or higher level is too powerful to be placed in a wand. Staves are more expensive, but can handle magic-user effects up to 7th level, or cleric (or illusionist) effects up to 6th level. Rods can produce any cleric or illusionist effect, and magic-user effects up to 8th level.

The creation of powerful items must be controlled, lest the campaign suffer. Since the charges in a *rod of permanency* could be used on living creatures, the creator loses 1 point of Constitution for each charge placed in the device (and has a 5% chance of losing a point while making the item, as per DMG pg. 46).

On a related note: DMs must be sure to apply the aging effects of certain spells (DMG pg. 13) to maintain game balance. Otherwise, after manufacturing items as described above, a powerful mage could simply *wish* the lost points of constitution back (at the rate of one *wish* per point until 16 is reached), thus suffering no ill effects from the applications of *permanency*.

ADQ: Could a *permanency* be cast on a *gate* spell effect?
ADA: Yes. But since an actual crack in existence is created by this spell, the consequences of such an act would be far-reaching. At the very least, matter and energy would flow from one plane to another (in a direction determined by the DM), or possibly both ways. In the short duration of a normal *gate* spell, this flow is nearly nothing; but over a long period, "interplanar erosion" could widen the crack until it threatens the local "endpoints" of the gate (i.e. planetary bodies) and could eventually damage the planes themselves. Extremely powerful other-planar beings would doubtless intervene long before such results could develop.

ADQ: How many attacks per round does a 9th level fighter or fighter sub-class get when throwing darts, daggers, or using a bow?
ADA: Use the rates of fire given for each weapon. Do *not* apply the "3 for 2" principle of multiple attacks (PH pg. 25), as these apply only to thrusting or striking weapons. The "attacks with two weapons" rule (DMG pg. 70) might be applied, but no mention of ranged weaponry is made in that section, and it is probably meant to apply to melee attacks only (cf. "florentine" style combat in other reference works). If the DM chooses to apply it to ranged combat, we suggest (unofficially) that the penalties for the "second weapon" attack, based on dexterity, be doubled.

ADQ: If a psionic character does not have a defense "up" when psionically attacked, how are the results calculated—vs. defenseless psionic, non-psionic, or what?
ADA: The mind of the psionic being attacked automatically "puts up" a defense — and the best possible one, at that (DMG pg. 79). If the victim possesses no defense mode (a rare event, but possible), calculate the result as if vs. defenseless psionic.

ADQ: If a thief finds a trap but fails in an attempt to remove it, what is the result?
ADA: It is usually triggered, but this is always at the DM's option. Many systems may be used to determine it randomly — a factor of the actual "remove traps" roll, a separate roll, a note in the trap description, etc. Some traps would obviously be triggered by attempts to remove them, and such obvious details should take precedence over random determination.

ADQ: What good is the *enchanted weapon* spell, if it confers "no bonuses whatsoever" (PH pg. 76)? Is this really a 4th level spell effect?
ADA: If a +1 weapon is required to damage a creature, this spell will allow any weapon treated to inflict normal damage. Since the caster must be 7th level, presumably accompanied by characters of similar power, most probably have at least one magical weapon; but if not, this spell can be critical (despite its long casting time).

This spell is most useful, however, to higher level characters adventuring on other planes of existence, where a weapon's status may be reduced from magical to mundane due to the interplanar distance from the weapon's point of origin. In addition, when an intelligent magical weapon becomes non-magical as a result of such travel, its intelligence is trapped incommunicado; this spell will restore it to magical status, thus enabling communication and the use of the weapon's special abilities.

ADQ: Why must a rust monster hit a victim's normal armor class? Magical *plate +4* would seem to be as easy to hit as non-magical armor — and both far easier than penetrating the armor to inflict damage.
ADA: Come on — rust monsters are nasty enough already. If you insist on being logical about it, and use a base of AC 10 modified only by magic and dexterity, then continue the logic to cover the situation: If a hit is scored, check to see if metal was hit, or merely leather or something else. This might be a 70% chance for plate mail, less for other types. Then, if metal was hit, check to see if it was the armor, or merely a fitting, a gauntlet, boot, shield, etc.

Note that the DRAGON1 magazine article on the ecology of the rust monster offered a plausible but *not official* rationale of its attack mode.

The AD&D game uses the abstract "to hit" roll for maximum playability without extreme unrealism. Game modifications for more "realism" (in a fantasy game?) usually add more complexity and result in slower play. If that's what you want, go ahead — but be sure to consider all the aftereffects of each change before implementing it.

ADQ: Must a cleric concentrate to Turn Undead?
ADA: Yes. Consider the action as requiring

verbal, somatic and material components.

ADQ: When a human non-fighter character with 18 strength starts dual-class life as a 1st level fighter, does the 18 change to 18/01 or better? How?

ADA: Yes; the player rolls d% at the time of the changeover, under DM observation. Once the fighter profession is begun, the strength can only return to 18 if the character suffers enough energy drains to be forced back to a single class. If such a victim is *restored* to dual class (via the 7th level cleric spell), the same super-strength returns; a new d% roll is *not* made.

ADQ: How long does it take to mount or dismount a *broom of flying*?

ADA: Such actions take 1-4 segments each, and other actions (spell casting, melee attack, etc.) can be performed in the same round (as the situation permits). Note, however, that any such action will automatically reduce multiple attack capability by 1; for example, when landing and then firing a bow, the normal rate of fire (2 per round) is reduced to 1 attack for that round.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

TSQ: A bulletproof vest halves the damage taken from a .30 caliber bullet, but are these pistol or rifle bullets — or both?

TSA: The bulletproof vest halves the damage taken from ammunition *above* .32 caliber for wounds to the areas covered by the vest only (i.e. chest and upper back). For ammo of .32 caliber or below, damage is reduced to 1 injury point per hit in these locations. This holds true for both pistol and rifle bullets.

TSQ: Suppose an assassin with a surprise value of 120 is trying to surprise a guard with a surprise value of 180. The rulebook says that if the difference between the values is 51 or greater, the party with the lower value is completely surprised. In this case the difference is 60 in favor of the guard. Does that mean that the guard ended up completely surprising the assassin?

TSA: Of course not. Surprise is used to see whether the sudden appearance of an opponent will cause one side or the other to momentarily delay action. Since the assassin has presumably had the guard under surveillance for several minutes, he could not be surprised even if the guard suddenly turned around. The guard could only surprise the assassin in the following cases:

1. If the assassin is just coming around a corner and randomly encounters the guard.
2. If the guard knew the assassin was in the area and was actively looking for him.
3. If the guard had the assassin under surveillance and tried to sneak up on him.

For a random encounter, the straight, unmodified surprise values of the characters involved are compared to determine surprise. If a character intends to attack by surprise, modifiers are added before the scores are compared. This still would not help the agent in the example that you give above — even with the maximum +50 modifier the agent still could not surprise the guard. However, under the circumstances, the guard could not surprise the assassin either. So you should simply run the battle normally, with neither side having the advantage of surprise.

TSQ: One of the characters in my campaign tried to assassinate a politician. He hit the target successfully, but rolled a wound amounting to 2 points of damage. If you were aiming at a particular part of the body (e.g. head), wouldn't you do more damage? What would the modifiers be?

TSA: For appropriate modifiers, refer to the Optional Specific Injury Determination rules on page 41 of the 2nd edition rulebook. A shot the head with a standard .45 caliber bullet adds 5 to the indicated damage (+3 for the location; +2 for the ammo). There was also an article in DRAGON® Magazine #49 which gave a useful variant on the damage system that takes into account the possibility of traumatic shock resulting from severe wounds.

In addition, remember that even in real life, a shot to the head does not have to result in a lethal wound. The game mechanics are specifically designed such that no matter how experienced and careful your character is, there is still a small chance of failure. This helps keep the game exciting and provides the victim with a chance to escape an apparently hopeless situation (a fact which you appreciate when it's your character that is facing insurmountable odds).

GAMMA WORLD®

Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: Can plastic armor (or any other technological armor) be enchanted like armor in the AD&D® Game?

GWA: No. There are no provisions for magic in the GAMMA WORLD® universe. There may be technological means of improving armor, but magical means are unavailable unless your referee has made special provisions within his campaign.

GWQ: The mutation *actual metamorphosis* allows a mutant to absorb a shot from an energy weapon and shoot it back out of his body in any direction he wishes. This is a very powerful mutation, and when combined with other mutations it could make a character godlike. In order for the mutation to be fair, our gaming group believes that when the mutant absorbs the energy, he should also take damage from it. The mutant can still shoot the energy back out of his body, however. Any thoughts?

GWA: The description of the mutation does not specify that the mutant is immune to damage from energy weapons. Although a character possessing this mutation automatically redirects the energy from such attacks, he takes normal damage in the process.

GWQ: Are punches from powered armor suits conducted differently from normal physical attacks?

GWA: No. When a creature wearing powered assault armor punches another creature, resolve the attack on Physical Attack Matrix II, as you would any other weaponless attack. The only difference is that the damage inflicted on a successful hit is much greater than it would be without powered armor.

GWQ: If the "Rite of Passage" adventure has already been played, how do new characters reach Rank 1?

GWA: To keep the campaign interesting, the GM should design a new adventure along the same lines as "Rite of Passage" for each set of new characters introduced. The details of the adventure should be different for each group that goes out so that players will not know exactly what to expect. Consider starting the new characters in a different city (if you have another developed for play), so that the background and terrain for the adventure could be varied.

GWQ: Someone in my campaign is using the *temporal fugue* mutation to reproduce money and weapons beyond counting. Is this fair, and how can it be controlled?

GWA: The mutation provides its own controls. The replicas disappear after 4 hours along with whatever they were carrying at the time they appeared, regardless of whether or not the items are still in their possession. All items taken from the past will return to the past when the duration of the effect is over.

GWQ: Can a monster (such as an Orlen) be used as a player character?

GWA: Yes, if your GM will allow it.

GWQ: Can a character with *thought imitation* return a *gamma eye* attack?

GWA: *The Gamma Eye* is listed as a mental mutation, so its use counts as a mental attack, and as such can be returned by a character with *thought imitation*. However, note that the effect of *the gamma eye* will cause its victim to fall unconscious immediately for 1 minute, so the attack cannot be returned until the victim regains consciousness, at which time *the gamma eye* attack will automatically affect the first creature looked at.